

U.S. Postal Inspection Service Strategy and Resources

AUDIT REPORT

Report Number 24-164-R25 | August 22, 2025



Plan

Action

Success

Table of Contents

Cover

Highlights	1
Background	1
What We Did	1
What We Found	1
Recommendations and Management's Comments	1

Transmittal Letter	2
---------------------------------	---

Results	3
Introduction/Objective	3
Background	3
Findings Summary	5
Finding #1: Opportunities to Strategically Align Resources	6
Recommendation #1	7
Postal Service Response	7
OIG Evaluation.....	7
Finding #2: Goals and Performance Measures Need Improvement	8
Recommendation #2	8
Postal Service Response	8
OIG Evaluation.....	9
Recommendation #3	10
Postal Service Response	10
OIG Evaluation.....	10
Recommendation #4	11
Postal Service Response	11
OIG Evaluation.....	11

Finding #3: Required Quarterly National Initiative Goals Not Met	12
Recommendation #5	13
Postal Service Response	13
OIG Evaluation.....	13

Appendices	14
-------------------------	----

Appendix A: Additional Information.....	15
Scope and Methodology	15
Prior Audit Coverage	16

Appendix B: Management's Comments	17
---	----

Contact Information	24
----------------------------------	----

Highlights

Background

The U.S. Postal Inspection Service's mission is to support and protect the U.S. Postal Service and its employees, infrastructure, and customers; enforce the laws that defend the nation's mail system from illegal or dangerous use; and ensure public trust in the mail. According to the Postal Inspection Service strategic plan, the key mission and business priorities were developed through research and represent critical and emerging issues affecting the Postal Service's employees, infrastructure, and products, as well as the success of the Postal Inspection Service's mission.

What We Did

Our objective was to assess the Postal Inspection Service's strategy, resources, and related strategic priorities used to accomplish its mission. To accomplish our objective, we interviewed Postal Inspection Service Headquarters management, evaluated its fiscal years (FY) 2025–2027 Strategic Plan and related goals and performance measures, and analyzed its workforce assessments.

What We Found

The Postal Inspection Service has opportunities to improve its strategy, use of resources, and related strategic priorities. Specifically, we found the Postal Inspection Service organization allocated resources to events that may not be the most effective use of resources to support its mission. Also, management did not create performance measures for three strategic goals, did not develop easy to measure key performance indicators, and relied on processes outside the Postal Inspection Service's control when measuring goals. Additionally, nine of 16 Postal Inspection Service divisions did not meet the required quarterly national initiative goals identified in their Comprehensive Division Plans. Finally, the Postal Inspection Service incurred over \$2.2 million in unsupported questioned costs to screen mail at sporting and political events when resources may be needed to support other key mission priorities.

Recommendations and Management's Comments

We made five recommendations to address the issues identified in the report. Postal Service management agreed with one recommendation and disagreed with four recommendations. Management's comments and our evaluation are at the end of each finding and recommendation. The U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) considers management's comments responsive to recommendation 2, as corrective action should resolve the issues identified. We will work with management through the audit resolution process on the remaining four recommendations. See Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety. See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

August 22, 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR: GARY R. BARKSDALE
CHIEF POSTAL INSPECTOR

DAN B. BRUBAKER
DEPUTY CHIEF INSPECTOR, EASTERN AREA

RAFAEL E. NUNEZ
DEPUTY CHIEF INSPECTOR, WESTERN AREA

DOMINIQUE N. GIROUX
INSPECTOR IN CHARGE, COMMUNICATIONS GOVERNANCE &
STRATEGY

Mary K. Lloyd

FROM: Mary K. Lloyd
Acting Deputy Assistant Inspector General
for Inspection Service and Cybersecurity & Technology

SUBJECT: Audit Report – U.S. Postal Inspection Service Strategy and Resources
(Report Number 24-164-R25)

This report presents the results of our audit of U.S. Postal Inspection Service Strategy and Resources.

All recommendations require U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General's (OIG) concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when corrective action is completed. Recommendation 2 should not be closed in the Postal Service's follow-up tracking system until the OIG provides written confirmation that the recommendation can be closed. We view the disagreements with recommendations 1, 3, 4, and 5 as unresolved and plan to pursue them through the audit resolution process.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesy provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Laura Lozon, Director, Inspection Service, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Corporate Audit Response Management

Results

Introduction/Objective

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service Strategy and Resources (Project Number 24-164). Our objective was to assess the U.S. Postal Inspection Service's strategy, resources, and related strategic priorities used to accomplish its mission. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about this audit.

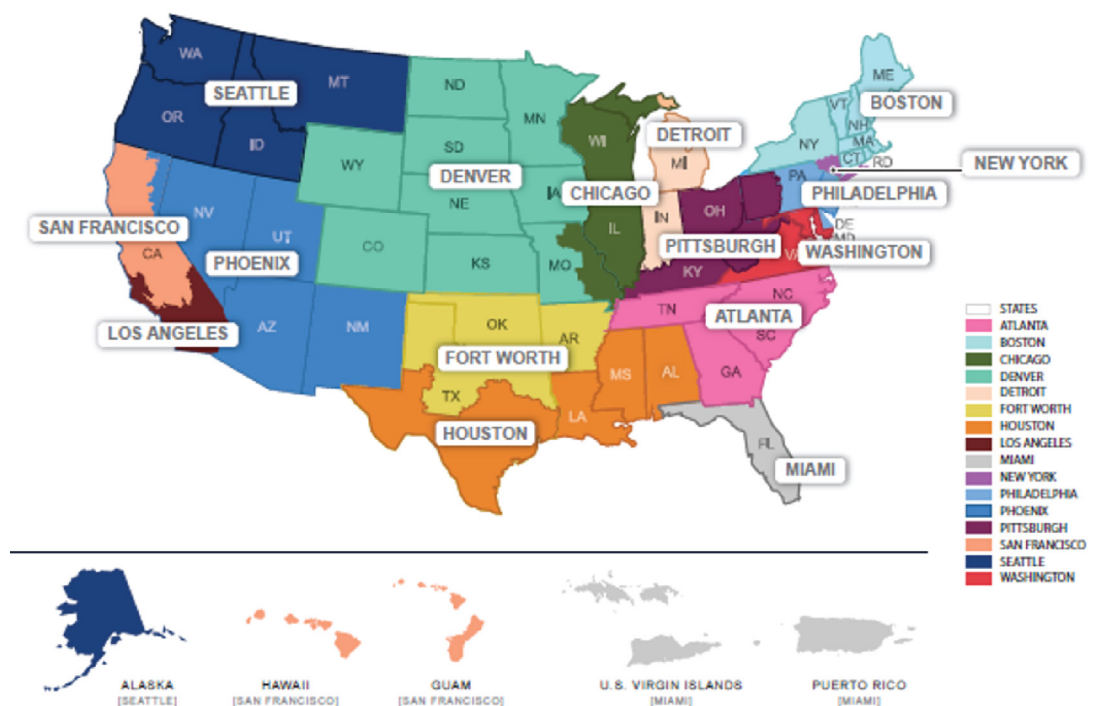
Background

As the law enforcement arm of the U.S. Postal Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service was established over 200 years ago to fight criminals who attacked and misused the nation's postal system. Since then, the Postal Inspection Service has evolved to combat new crimes and threats, and to enhance the security of the nation's mail system.

The Postal Inspection Service's mission is to support and protect the Postal Service and its employees, infrastructure, and customers; enforce the laws that defend the nation's mail system from illegal or dangerous use; and ensure public trust in the mail. The Postal Inspection Service includes 10 headquarters groups¹ and 16 field divisions, as shown in Figure 1, to carry out its mission and enforce nearly 200 federal laws covering crimes regarding the attack or misuse of the postal system.² Specifically, postal inspectors have investigative authority for criminal matters involving the integrity and security of the Postal Service, and postal police officers (PPO) have the power to protect postal employees, customers, and property.³ According to management, the Postal Inspection Service consisted of 1,215 postal inspectors, 445 postal police officers and 610 various professional, technical, and administrative employees⁴ onboard as of January 2025.

Figure 1. Mapped U.S. Postal Inspection Service Field Division Locations

Source: *U.S. Postal Inspection Service Strategic Plan, Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 – FY 2027*.



1 (1) Analytics, (2) Communications, Governance & Strategy, (3) Business Operations, (4) Contraband Interdiction & Investigations, (5) Career Development Unit, (6) Criminal Investigations, (7) Security, (8) Cyber & Investigative Technology, (9) Office of Counsel, and (10) Forensic Laboratory Services.

2 Publication 278, *U.S. Postal Inspection Service: A Guide for the U.S. Congress*, dated February 2008.

3 18 U.S. Code § 3061 – Investigative powers of Postal Service personnel.

4 These employees provide administrative, technical, analytics, project management, background security and communications/investigative support to the Postal Inspection Service.

Postal Inspection Service Workforce and Budget Process

The Chief Postal Inspector oversees all operations⁵ of the Postal Inspection Service, and four deputy chief inspectors (DCI),⁶ two of which manage the national programs and policies, while the inspectors-in-charge are assigned to the 16 divisions and manage workforce decisions in their respective divisions.

The Postal Inspection Service’s overall budget and total authorized staffing levels are approved by the Postal Service. The annual budget reflects the Postal Inspection Service’s operating plan required to accomplish its goals in all functional areas. Annually, the Postal Inspection Service Headquarters groups and field divisions submit fund requests to the Postal Inspection Service Budget and Finance group and the chief postal inspector requests funds from the Postal Service⁷ to support their mission. Staffing complement is set at the authorized number, and change requests are submitted to the respective DCI for approval. The Postal Inspection Service’s authorized budgets⁸ for fiscal years (FY) 2023 and 2024 were \$620 million and \$636 million, respectively.

Strategic Planning

The Postal Inspection Service’s strategic plan has evolved since 2001. Previous strategic plans included

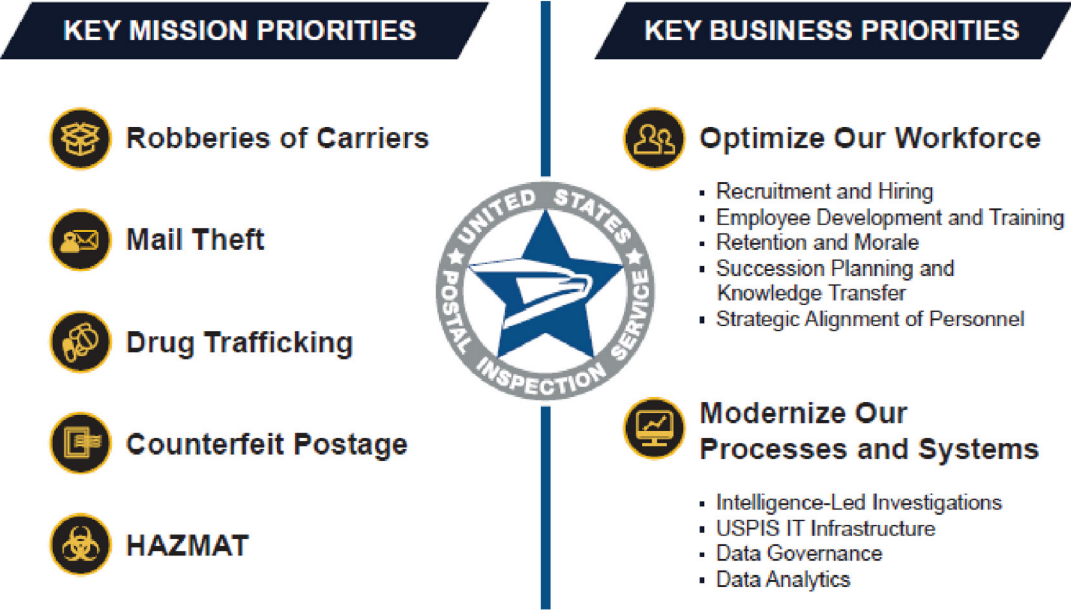
the Postal Inspection Service mission and vision as well as strategic goals, objectives, and performance measures for each goal. In October 2024, the Postal Inspection Service issued its FY 2025 through FY 2027⁹ strategic plan, which identified and prioritized strategic targets and defined tactical actions required to succeed in the current law enforcement environment.

According to the strategic plan, the key mission priorities represent critical and emerging issues affecting the Postal Service’s employees, infrastructure, and products, as well as the success of the Postal Inspection Service’s mission. The five key mission priorities are: 1) Robberies of Carriers, 2) Mail Theft, 3) Drug Trafficking, 4) Counterfeit Postage, and 5) Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT), as shown in Figure 2.

In addition, the Postal Inspection Service’s strategic plan outlines key business priorities that allow it to address and enable the five key mission priorities. The agency’s key business priorities are organized into two categories: (1) Optimize our Workforce and (2) Modernize our Processes and Systems, also shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. U.S. Postal Inspection Service Key Mission and Business Priorities

Source: U.S. Postal Inspection Service Strategic Plan (FY 2025 – FY 2027).



5 National headquarters, 16 field divisions, two service centers, and a national forensic laboratory.
6 (1) DCI, Criminal Investigations, (2) DCI, Security & Crime Prevention, (3) DCI, Eastern Area, and (4) DCI, Western Area.
7 Budget requests are sent to the Postal Service for the following year and include executive committee involvement.
8 Related to personnel compensation, non-personnel, and capital commitment expenses.
9 U.S. Postal Inspection Service Strategic Plan, FY 2025 – FY 2027.

Performance Management

The chief postal inspector is responsible for submitting an annual Performance Accountabilities and Goals (PAG) setting document to the postmaster general to ensure Postal Inspection Service's organizational goals and objectives align with the current Delivering for America (DFA)¹⁰ strategies. Each executive leadership team member is responsible for ensuring that direct reports have specific, measurable, actionable, reasonable and timely goals and metrics that align with the DFA plan and the "Get It Right" portfolio.¹¹

In addition to the PAG document, the Postal Inspection Service initiated a new process for FY 2025 where all headquarters groups submitted National Headquarters Comprehensive Group Plans (CGP) outlining group priorities and ensuring alignment with the mission and business priorities identified in the strategic plan. According to management, this process is currently in the development stage and will be formalized¹² for FY 2026. The Postal Inspection

Service also required each division to complete a Comprehensive Division Plan (CDP) at the beginning of the fiscal year. The CDPs are composed of division priorities and national initiatives. The division priorities consist of objectives that align with a particular strategic priority and/or core pillar. The national initiatives are mandatory activities prescribed by a specific program from its corresponding headquarters group and some of the initiatives may have quarterly requirements that the divisions must meet.

Findings Summary

We found opportunities to improve the Postal Inspection Service's strategic plan, use of resources, and ability to execute the strategy to accomplish its mission. Specifically, management should take advantage of opportunities to better strategically align its resources to meet the Postal Inspection Service's mission, improve strategic goals and key performance measures, and improve CDP oversight.

¹⁰ The Postal Service published the DFA plan on March 23, 2021, with a 10-year plan to transform the Postal Service from an organization in financial and operational crisis to a world-class delivery service.

¹¹ The "Get It Right" portfolio includes commitment to Protect, Prevent, Enforce and Prepare which are also known as the Postal Inspection Service's four core pillars.

¹² Status as of April 1, 2025.

Finding #1: Opportunities to Strategically Align Resources

Opportunities exist for the Postal Inspection Service to improve the alignment of its personnel resources with its mission and priorities.

We found the Postal Inspection Service could improve its processes to ensure it fully aligns personnel across the organization to accomplish its mission. Management identified combating mail theft, robberies, and counterfeit postage as key mission priorities and noted an increase in criminals stealing Postal Service keys to commit mail theft and a substantial increase in the creation, sale, and use of counterfeit postage labels and stamps since 2020. However, mail theft and robbery cases, and postal inspector workhours decreased 74 percent and 89 percent, respectively, from FY 2022 to FY 2024. Also, while counterfeit postage cases increased 171 percent from FY 2022 to FY 2024, they were only about .5 percent of the Postal Inspection Service's total caseload. The Postal Service estimates loss of revenue due to counterfeit postage between \$600 million and \$1 billion annually, which could signal that additional resources may be needed to tackle this growing threat to the Postal Service.

We also found the Postal Inspection Service allocated resources to sporting and political events, which may not be the most effective use of resources to support its mission. For example, during FY 2023 to FY 2024, postal inspectors used over 28,000 workhours to support sporting events, such as the National Basketball Association All-Star Game, U.S. Open golf tournament, the National Football League Super Bowl as well as political events, such as the Republican and Democratic National Conventions. Also, one division workforce allocation assessment noted other major upcoming sporting events as part of its justification for additional resources. Another division explained that the need to support the Super Bowl required resources as well. In addition, it assigned postal inspectors to the National Football League operations center for the Super Bowl.

Management stated the Postal Inspection Service conducts mail and package screening operations at these events to prevent potential mail threats associated with chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive risks. The Postal Inspection Service policy¹³ states that national mail screening may be authorized for high profile and high-risk security events and the Code of Federal Regulations¹⁴ authorizes the screening of such mail by any means capable of identifying explosives, non-mailable firearms, or other dangerous contents in the mail. However, we found that the chief postal inspector authorized mail screening services for events that did not mention the threat-level designation, the specific threat, or high-level/high-risk attendees in the request letter. Also, according to one event post survey, the personnel assigned stated it was unnecessary and overstaffed.

In addition, while management stated it continually reviews resources to ensure personnel are strategically aligned to meet agency objectives — and the Postal Inspection Service recently realigned headquarters staffing — management did not complete resource reviews¹⁵ for PPOs and postal inspectors nationwide.¹⁶

Because the Postal Inspection Service investigative responsibilities can overlap with other federal law enforcement agencies, it is critical that resources are dedicated to its specific mission areas that have direct impact on postal operations.¹⁷ Specific screening of mail is something that could potentially be done by private specialized mail screening service companies, and these companies are currently hired to screen mail in prisons and high profile venues. Such services could be similarly implemented for sporting and political events.

This occurred because inspectors in charge are given authority to decide how to address their own division's needs, and headquarters management

¹³ Inspection Service Manual, section 5.7.7.4 Mail Screening for High Profile and High-Risk Events, dated October 2024.

¹⁴ Title 39 U.S.C. § 233.11 – Mail screening.

¹⁵ National Resources Reviews are in process and are intended to assess the resources across the divisions.

¹⁶ This was also identified in a Government Accountability Office report, *U.S. Postal Service Inspection Service Should Document Its Law Enforcement Workforce Decision-Making Processes* (Report Number [GAO-24-106497](#), dated May 2024).

¹⁷ *Postal Inspection Service Resource Allocations for FY 2003* (Report Number [SA-AR-03-005](#), dated August 20, 2003).

did not provide oversight to determine the most effective use of resources. Also, Postal Service guidance¹⁸ instructs the Postal Inspection Service to align its organizational goals and objectives with Postal Service goals and assign those goals to directors and staff members to ensure functions are equipped to deliver expected performance outcomes and results.

When the Postal Inspection Service allocates personnel to things like sporting and political events, key mission priorities, such as mail theft, robberies and counterfeit postage, may not be fully addressed. As a result of allocating over 28,000 workhours to screen mail at sporting and political events, the Postal Inspection Service incurred over \$2.2 million in unsupported questioned costs.¹⁹

The Postal Inspection Service is in the process of completing the PPO resource review and national resource review to align personnel across divisions and headquarters groups,²⁰ in response to a May 2024 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report. Accordingly, the OIG will not make a recommendation to complete these reviews.

Recommendation #1

We recommend the **Chief Postal Inspector** discontinue supporting events that do not directly support the Postal Inspection Service's mission, reassess the allocation of personnel, and provide oversight of divisions' use of resources.

Postal Service Response

Management disagreed with this finding and recommendation 1, as well as the monetary impact. Regarding the finding, management stated utilizing case and inspector workhour data are not reliable indicators of whether personnel resources are aligned to their mission and priorities. Also, management stated it received mail screening requests from event organizers and law enforcement agencies and have regulatory authority to conduct mail screenings at these prominent events. In addition, management stated the mail screenings are driven by national security interests and local threat briefings to protect the mail against threats.

OIG Evaluation

We consider management's comments nonresponsive for finding 1 and recommendation 1. Regarding management's disagreement with the finding, although the Postal Inspection Service may be authorized to conduct mail screening, this may not be the best use of its resources when considering other key mission priorities. Specifically, we found that the chief postal inspector authorized mail screening services for events where the request letter did not mention the threat-level designation, the specific threat, or high-level/high-risk attendees. We view recommendation 1 as unresolved and will work with management during the audit resolution process.

¹⁸ FY 2025 Performance Accountabilities and Goals Process, dated November 8, 2024.

¹⁹ A subset of questioned costs that are called into question because of missing or incomplete documentation, or because of failure to follow required procedures. Unsupported Questioned costs should be calculated for not more than 2 years or 24 months historical immediately prior to the audit. Generally, this category applies to events which occurred prior to the audit. They are never forecast over a future period.

²⁰ GAO agreed to revise the recommendation implementation date from April 2025 to April 2026.

Finding #2: Goals and Performance Measures Need Improvement

Opportunities exist for the Postal Inspection Service to improve its strategic goals and performance measures. Specifically, three strategic goals did not have key performance indicators (KPI)²¹ to track the progress of those goals. In addition, the Postal Inspection Service established KPIs and division objectives that will be difficult to measure when assessing performance toward meeting the agency's mission. Finally, the Postal Inspection Service relied on processes owned and controlled by the Postal Service to achieve a goal for two key mission priorities.

Established Strategic Goals Without Performance Measures

Three strategic plan goals, for separate key mission and business priorities, do not include associated KPIs to measure progress of the goals. According to the FY 2025 – FY 2027 strategic plan, KPIs will be used to monitor and report progress toward the goals. Although two goals' KPIs were documented in the CDPs or CGPs, we could not identify KPIs for the third goal.

The following Drug Trafficking and Strategic Alignment of Personnel goals, as shown below, did not have KPIs included in the strategic plan, to monitor progress:

- Advance efforts to increase employee safety, awareness, and engagement (Drug Trafficking)
- Assess PPO resources to support strategic alignment with Postal Service needs (Strategic Alignment of Personnel)
- Assess the strategic alignment of personnel in headquarters groups (Strategic Alignment of Personnel)

This occurred because management stated not all KPIs are listed in the strategic plan and not every goal can be a priority.

According to the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA),²² the strategic plan should describe how the goals and objectives are to be achieved, including a description of the resources required to meet those goals and objectives. KPIs that directly align to relevant goals assist organizations in measuring progress. As a good practice, Postal Service components should also comply with this standard.

Strategic planning helps identify risks and opportunities, allowing management to make well informed decisions and ensure alignment across the organization toward meeting goals. Therefore, related KPIs that directly align to relevant goals are important so that organizations can measure progress toward those specific goals.

Recommendation #2

We recommend the **Inspector in Charge, Communications, Governance, and Strategy**, update the strategic plan to ensure that all strategic goals have measurable key performance indicators.

Postal Service Response

Management partially agreed with finding 2 and agreed with recommendation 2. Regarding finding 2, management stated the Postal Inspection Service strategic plan includes quantifiable indicators with milestones that best indicate progress, which is a best practice. Also, management stated the Postal Inspection Service strategic plan pairs these interdependent activities with Postal Inspection Service indicators, which is appropriate for shared goals. In addition, management stated it relies on a continuous review and monitoring cycle to ensure it meets key mission priority goals.

²¹ KPI are quantifiable indicators of progress toward an intended result and provide a focus for strategic and operational improvement.

²² GPRA, P.L. 103-62, Section 2802(a)(3) of title 39, United States Code.

Regarding recommendation 2, management will update the Postal Inspection Service strategic plan to ensure that all strategic goals have measurable key performance indicators. The target implementation date is December 31, 2025.

OIG Evaluation

OIG considers management’s comments responsive to recommendation 2, and corrective action should resolve the issue identified in the report.

Performance Measures Difficult to Measure

Postal Inspection Service management established KPIs and division objectives in the strategic plan and CDP documents that will be difficult to measure when assessing performance toward meeting the key mission or business priority. See Table 1 for examples.

According to the PAG document, each executive leadership team member is responsible for ensuring that direct reports have specific, measurable, actionable, reasonable, and timely goals and metrics. In addition, the Postal Inspection Service initiated a new process for FY 2025 where all headquarters groups submitted plans outlining group priorities

and ensuring alignment with mission and business priorities in the strategic plan. Finally, each division had to complete a CDP at the beginning of the fiscal year. The CDPs provide the divisions with an opportunity to address local challenges while also ensuring alignment with the strategic plan by creating division specific measurable objectives.

The development of unmeasurable KPIs occurred because management did not provide sufficient guidance and oversight to ensure KPIs, and division objectives were specific, measurable, actionable, reasonable and timely.

According to GPRA,²³ outcome measures must be clearly defined, quantifiable, and have established targets to track progress toward achieving desired outcomes.

Clear strategic goals help organizations more effectively allocate their resources and help leaders prioritize initiatives that directly contribute to the organization’s pursuit of desired outcomes. By not developing and tracking measurable objectives throughout the organization, management may not have a clear and measurable representation of the program’s success.

Table 1. Difficult Performance Measures

Key Mission or Business Priority	Postal Inspection Service Document	Performance Measures ²⁴ Used
Counterfeit Postage	Strategic Plan	Progress toward review of personnel, technology, and training, and implementation of review recommendations.
HAZMAT	Strategic Plan	Progress toward implementing policy changes on safe handling protocols, compliance, and enforcement.
USPIS IT Infrastructure	Strategic Plan	Tracking of collaboration and alignment with USPS as well as technological parity.
Mail Theft ²⁵	CDP	Divisions to collaborate with headquarters regarding the deployment installation of high-security eArrow lock installation.
Drug Trafficking	CDP	Focus on continued development of partnerships and task force officers for our large geographic area as well as provide resources to our partners, such as implementing a special assistant United States attorney to further successful prosecution of our Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force and Contraband Interdiction and Investigation cases.

Source: Postal Inspection Service Strategic Plan FY 2025 – FY 2027 and FY 2025 CDPs.

²³ Public Law 111-352, 111th Congress, GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, January 4, 2011.
²⁴ KPI and Division Objectives.
²⁵ The division CDP references this strategic priority as Other/Misc., but OIG review concluded the measurable division objective to be directly related to mail theft.

Recommendation #3

We recommend the **Inspector in Charge, Communications, Governance, and Strategy**, update instructions for developing performance measures and instruct preparers to revise key performance indicators, and division objectives to be specific, measurable, actionable, reasonable, and timely.

Postal Service Response

Management disagreed with recommendation 3. Management stated the recommendation is unnecessarily prescriptive and that its current governance already requires divisions to propose objectives with performance indicators that are measurable and clearly defined. Also, management stated that imposing new instructions could constrain operational flexibility across the organization.

OIG Evaluation

We consider management’s comments nonresponsive to recommendation 3. Regarding management’s disagreement with the recommendation, having performance measures that are clearly defined and quantifiable, and having established targets helps ensure management’s ability to track progress

toward achieving desired outcomes. We view recommendation 3 as unresolved and will work with management during the audit resolution process.

Processes Outside Postal Inspection Service Control

The Postal Inspection Service relied on processes owned and controlled by the Postal Service to measure a goal for two key mission priorities. According to the strategic plan, the Postal Inspection Service works with the Postal Service to develop and deploy advanced technologies and implement security enhancements. One of the goals for the Robberies of Carriers and Mail Theft priorities is to enhance delivery security, including increasing the security of mail receptacles and deploying better locking mechanisms. However, the number and deployment of high-security collection boxes and electronic locks are controlled by Postal Service management. This goal (Enhance Delivery Security) is included in the Postal Inspection Service Strategic Plan, PAG document, and headquarters Criminal Investigations’ CGP, and relies on the Postal Service for implementation (see Table 2).

Table 2. Performance Measures for Robberies of Carriers and Mail Theft Priorities Enhance Delivery Security Goals

Key Mission Priority and Goal	Postal Inspection Service Document	Performance Measure
Robberies of Carriers and Mail Theft - Enhance Delivery Security	Strategic Plan	Deployment of high-security collection boxes and electronic locks.
	PAG	Number of high-security collection boxes and number of high-security electronic locks installed.
	CGP	Deployment of high-security collection boxes and electronic locks.

Source: U.S. Postal Inspection Service Strategic Plan FY 2025 – FY 2027, FY 2025 PAG, and FY 2025 Criminal Investigations CGP.

Management stated setting goals based on the electronic lock and high-security collection box installations allows the Postal Inspection Service to be aware of the enhanced security implementation and retain a strong connection to the Postal Service's success. Also, management stated it assigned a postal inspector to coordinate this security enhancement implementation. While the Postal Inspection Service acknowledged it is not directly involved in the installations, management stated it is part of the overall effort to ensure these security enhancements are complete and effective.

As a best practice,²⁶ strategic plans should contain goals and objectives, including outcome-oriented goals, for the major functions and operations of the agency. In addition, Postal Service Headquarters' guidance²⁷ requires leadership to be responsible for ensuring department KPIs are actionable and reasonable. Without measurable goals within their control, management may make uninformed business decisions needed to secure the Postal Service delivery network from criminal attacks and violent crimes against postal employees, which can affect customer and employee safety.

Recommendation #4

We recommend the **Inspector in Charge, Communications, Governance, and Strategy**, revise the high-security Collection Box and high-security electronic locks installation performance measures to include metrics within Postal Inspection Service's control.

Postal Service Response

Management disagreed with recommendation 4. Management stated that the goals for installing the high-security collection box and high-security electronic locks are enterprise activities managed and funded by the Postal Service, relying on vendors and operations outside the Postal Inspection Service's control, and that the strategic goal is designed to provide a solution in coordination with the Postal Service. Management also stated that the Inspection Service strategic plan intentionally treats these measures as interconnected Postal Service metrics and pairs them with Inspection Service controlled indicators. In addition, creating separate Inspection Service metrics would misrepresent control and accountability.

OIG Evaluation

We consider management's comments nonresponsive for recommendation 4. In its comments, Postal Inspection Service management stated its strategic plan is designed to provide a solution for high-security collection boxes and high-security electronic locks activities in coordination with the Postal Service. However, we stand by our finding that without actionable and reasonable performance measures within its control to manage, the Postal Inspection Service will be hard pressed in measuring its progress toward implementing said solution. We view recommendation 4 as unresolved and will work with management during the audit resolution process.

²⁶ Public Law 111-352, 111th Congress, GPRA Modernization Act of 2010, January 4, 2011.

²⁷ FY 2025 Performance Accountabilities and Goals Process, dated November 8, 2024.

Finding #3: Required Quarterly National Initiative Goals Not Met

While all divisions met the Retail Acceptance testing²⁸ quarterly requirement, nine of 16 Postal Inspection Service divisions did not meet one or more of the remaining three required quarterly national initiative goals identified in the CDPs. Specifically, these divisions did not complete one or more of these minimum requirements to support the Mail Theft and HAZMAT key mission priorities, as shown in Table 3:

- Arrow key accountability program/audit²⁹
- HAZMAT/Mail Incident Reporting Tool (MIRT) training³⁰
- HAZMAT/MIRT reviews³¹

This occurred due to a lack of division management and DCI oversight. While management stated it used a continuous review and monitoring cycle to track goals, management was not aware its divisions were at risk of not meeting minimum quarterly requirements. Division management shared that contributing factors to not meeting quarterly requirements included employee availability, unexpected resource constraints, and lack of Postal Service facility cooperation.

Table 3. Divisions Not in Compliance With National Initiative Quarterly Requirements

Division	Did Not Meet Arrow Key Accountability Program/Audit Requirement	Did Not Meet HAZMAT/MIRT	
		Training Requirement	Review Requirement
Atlanta			
Boston		X	
Chicago			
Denver			X
Detroit	X		X
Fort Worth			
Houston		X	X
Los Angeles			X
Miami		X	X
New York			
Philadelphia			
Phoenix			X
Pittsburgh			
San Francisco			
Seattle		X	X
Washington		X	

Source: FY 2025, quarter 1, CDP Results, dated January 28, 2025, and OIG analysis.

28 This testing requires the hazardous materials program specialist to prepare an annual seeding report for distribution to the Homeland Security coordinator.
 29 The arrow key accountability program initiative provides the opportunity for divisions to identify arrow key deficiencies by performing audits of Postal Service facilities.
 30 The postal inspectors provide HAZMAT/MIRT training to Postal Service employees who are the primary and secondary points of contact for the MIRT system, geared toward protecting the mailstream and keeping employees safe.
 31 The HAZMAT/MIRT review initiative focuses on visits to Postal Service facilities to determine whether these facilities comply with the MIRT process.

Postal Service Headquarters groups determined all divisions must conduct three arrow key accountability audits, at least five HAZMAT/MIRT training courses, and at least six MIRT compliance reviews at postal facilities per quarter. The accountability audits, training courses, and compliance reviews are important because they allow the Postal Inspection Service to educate Postal Service employees on personal safety, how to secure the mail, and the importance of reporting lost or stolen arrow keys promptly.

When there is insufficient oversight over arrow keys, there is an increased risk of lost or stolen keys, which can result in mail theft or the inability to collect or deliver mail. This may damage the Postal Service's reputation and diminish public trust in the nation's mail system. In addition, insufficient HAZMAT/MIRT training and reviews could increase the risk to employee safety and a decrease in physical security.

Recommendation #5

We recommend the **Deputy Chief Inspector, Eastern Area, and Deputy Chief Inspector, Western Area**, establish internal controls to obtain periodic updates prior to the end of the quarter to ensure required quarterly and annual goals are met.

Postal Service Response

Management disagreed with finding 3 and recommendation 5. Regarding finding 3, management stated in most cases where quarterly targets were missed, the division's inspector in charge (INC) and the deputy chief inspector (DCI) were aware of the contributing factors. Management also stated that INCs and DCIs have processes in place to identify obstacles toward meeting annual goals.

Regarding recommendation 5, management stated DCIs for Eastern and Western Field Operations already have an established process to monitor performance. This process includes a requirement for divisions to set annual goals, identify obstacles, and meet to discuss progress to ensure goals are met by the end of the fiscal year.

OIG Evaluation

We consider management's comments nonresponsive for recommendation 5. Regarding management's disagreement with the recommendation, Postal Inspection Service Headquarters management determines the timing and nature of the required quarterly and annual National Initiative goals. While management stated it uses a continuous monitoring process, it was not aware that some divisions were at risk of not meeting the required quarterly goals. We view recommendation 5 as unresolved and will work with management during the audit resolution process.

Appendices

Appendix A: Additional Information.....	15
Scope and Methodology	15
Prior Audit Coverage	16
Appendix B: Management's Comments	17

Appendix A: Additional Information

Scope and Methodology

The scope of our audit included a review of the Postal Inspection Service's processes and procedures for accomplishing strategic goals and the alignment of resources and expenditures to carry out its mission.

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed the Postal Inspection Service's policies and procedures related to strategic planning, resources, and budget.
- Reviewed the current Postal Inspection Service's and the Postal Service's strategic plans to evaluate the overall alignment between the strategic plans.
- Assessed the Postal Inspection Service CDPs, CGPs, and PAG to identify the performance measures that address the needs and challenges faced by the division and alignment with the agency's strategic priorities and core pillars.
- Analyzed strategic documents to include CDPs and quarter 1 performance measure results for the 16 divisions to assess the adequacy of the Postal Inspection Service's Review and Monitoring Cycle process.
- Reviewed Postal Inspection Service FY 2024 and FY 2025 staffing/complement data and FY 2025 workforce allocation assessments to determine the authorized and onboard workforce and assigned resources across the 16 divisions.
- Interviewed the Postal Inspection Service's Headquarters management to gain an understanding of the strategic plan's goals and key performance indicators used to gauge the success of the plan's goals, workforce allocation, and budget processes.
- Reviewed prior OIG and external stakeholders' audit work related to the assessment of Postal Inspection Service's resources.

We conducted this performance audit from September 2024 through August 2025 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as we considered necessary under the circumstances. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on July 14, 2025, and included its comments where appropriate.

In planning and conducting the audit, we obtained an understanding of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service's strategy and resources internal control structure to help determine the nature, timing, and extent of our audit procedures. We reviewed the management controls for overseeing the program and mitigating associated risks. Additionally, we assessed the internal control components and underlying principles, and we determined that the following five components were significant to our audit objective:

- Control Environment
- Risk Assessment
- Control Activities
- Information and Communication
- Monitoring

We developed audit work to ensure that we assessed these controls. Based on the work performed, we identified internal control deficiencies related to the control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring that were significant within the context of our objectives. Our recommendations, if implemented, should correct the weaknesses we identified.

We assessed the reliability of Case Management System case data and Enterprise Data Warehouse data by performing logical tests of completeness, reasonableness, accuracy, and validity on key fields. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Prior Audit Coverage

These reports reflect prior audits or reviews, issued within the last five years, related to the objective of this audit.

Report Title	Objective	Report Number	Final Report Date	Monetary Impact
<i>U.S. Postal Service: Inspection Service Should Document Its Law Enforcement Workforce Decision-Making Processes</i>	Government Accountability Office was asked to review issues related to postal crime and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service's use of postal inspectors and postal police.	GAO-24-106497	05/29/2024	\$0
<i>U.S. Postal Service's Response to Mail Theft</i>	Evaluate the Postal Service's efforts to respond to mail theft.	22-178-R23	09/28/2023	\$1,008,976

Appendix B: Management's Comments



August 7, 2025

LAURA LOZON
DIRECTOR, AUDIT SERVICES

SUBJECT: Management Response: *U.S. Postal Inspection Service Strategy and Resources* (24-164-DRAFT)

Thank you for providing the Postal Inspection Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings and recommendations contained in the draft audit report, *U.S. Postal Inspection Service Strategy and Resources*. However, we note that the audit was conducted during the first two quarters of the initial year of our three-year strategic plan, limiting the review primarily to planning documentation and early-stage activities. Given that the implementation and complete realization of the plan's objectives extend beyond the scope and timeframe of this audit, any conclusions regarding the overall effectiveness and impact of the strategic plan are premature. A comprehensive evaluation would require assessing outcomes achieved throughout the implementation period.

The following are our comments on each of the three findings:

Finding 1: Opportunities to Strategically Align Resources

Opportunities exist for the Postal Inspection Service to improve the alignment of its personnel resources with its mission and priorities.

Management **disagrees** with Finding 1.

We disagree that utilizing the number of new cases jacketed and raw work hours are reliable indicators of whether personnel resources are aligned to our mission and priorities. Specific and limited case categories are not a reliable indicator when not including other case categories, which provide a more accurate context of the work being performed. Prevention cases along with other case categories were excluded from OIG's review and would be relevant activity toward our overall efforts in support of our mission priorities.

As a law enforcement agency, we allocate resources based on risk, harm, and expected impact, rather than solely based on caseload. More broadly, resource deployment varies by division, depending on local conditions, which provides context for why case counts, or work hours alone are not reliable indicators of alignment.

Regarding counterfeit postage, the Strategic Plan acknowledges a material Postal Service revenue risk. The Strategic Plan commits to increasing personnel, enhancing technology, and improving training for that program, with KPIs that track losses identified, recovered, or avoided, as well as interdictions. These are resource commitments aimed at mitigating monetary loss and enterprise risk. The OIG report did not consider our non-criminal efforts, such as prevention, training, and shared initiatives through our partnership with USPS.

Further we are in complete disagreement that allocating resources to support mail screening for high profile and high-risk security events was not the most effective use of resources to support our mission. The Postal Inspection Service engages in work with a postal nexus and adheres to its mission, to protect USPS infrastructure, employees, and customers from illegal or dangerous use. When Dangerous Mail Investigations (DMI) mail screenings are conducted, we are not only holding true to our mission, but we are afforded the regulatory authority to do so by the Code of Federal Regulations (39 C.F.R. §233.11) and policy. Please reference our response in Recommendation #1 for more details.

We disagree with the report's statement, in reference to mail screening events, that "[t]his occurred because inspectors in charge are given authority to decide how to address their own division's needs, and headquarters management did not provide oversight to determine the most effective use of resources." Requests to conduct screening at high-profile events come from event organizers, who are customers of the postal service, and other law enforcement agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security. The screenings are driven by national security interest, local threat briefing (or intel) to protect the mail against CBRNE or explosive threats. These requests undergo a structured vetting process within the relevant division and the DMI Program before being submitted to the Chief Postal Inspector for review and approval. During National Special Security Events like the Super Bowl, postal inspectors coordinate delivery operations through potential hazards to ensure mail service continues without unreasonable delays, while maintaining real-time liaison with partner agencies.

Furthermore, a subjective statement of "overstaffing" was made in the report with no evidence or analysis provided. Staffing levels fluctuate through the duration of the mail screening events. Factors for the fluctuation include contingencies based on detection and further evaluation mail items

Finding 2: Goals and Performance Measures Need Improvement

Opportunities exist for the Postal Inspection Service to improve its strategic goals and performance measures. Specifically, three strategic goals did not have key performance indicators (KPI) to track the progress of those goals. In addition, the Postal Inspection Service established KPIs and division objectives that will be difficult to measure when assessing performance toward meeting the agency's mission.

Finally, the Postal Inspection Service relied on processes owned and controlled by the Postal Service to achieve a goal for two key mission priorities.

Management **partially disagrees** with Finding 2.

The Strategic Plan includes numerous quantifiable indicators and utilizes milestones that best indicate progress. This pairing of outcome indicators with milestones is an accepted practice in performance management. We agree that we should update the Strategic Plan to ensure that all strategic goals have measurable key performance indicators.

Regarding reliance on processes owned and controlled by the Postal Service, several objectives are designed to be cross-enterprise. The Strategic Plan pairs these interdependent activities with USPS-controlled indicators, such as interdictions, trainings, and prevention activities, along with milestones that track the Postal Service's progress. This structure is appropriate for achieving shared goals. In essence, the strategic goals are designed to solve problems that require combined effort from the USPS and the Postal Inspection Service.

Finally, while the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-11 (2024), Part 6, does not apply to the U.S. Postal Service, it serves as best-practice guidance. OMB developed Part 6 to guide Executive Branch agencies on complying with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). Part 6 acknowledges that factors beyond an agency's control can impact goals and recommends using a combination of goal indicators and milestones, supplemented by data-driven quarterly reviews and annual strategic reviews. Our Strategic Plan's continuous review and monitoring cycle reflects this approach.

Finding 3: Required Quarterly National Initiative Goals Not Met

While all divisions met the Retail Acceptance testing quarterly requirement, nine of 16 Postal Inspection Service divisions did not meet one or more of the remaining three required quarterly national initiative goals identified in the CDPs. Specifically, these divisions did not complete one or more of these minimum requirements to support the Mail Theft and HAZMAT key mission priorities, as shown in Table 3.

Management **disagrees** with Finding 3.

Management disagrees that this occurred due to a lack of division management and Deputy Chief Inspector (DCI) oversight. No empirical evidence was provided to substantiate the claims that the results are due to a lack of division management or DCI oversight.

Our process is for the appropriate DCI to review progress with the division and identify any barriers to completing their goals. DCIs and Inspectors in Charge have processes in place to identify obstacles toward meeting annual goals. In most cases

where quarterly targets were missed, division management and the DCI were aware of the contributing factors, such as 1) lack of personnel (i.e., vacancies, retirements, and attrition), 2) significant investigative events, and 3) natural disasters (i.e., fires, floods, hurricanes). Through these touch points, the DCI and INC develop a plan to ensure the goals are met by the conclusion of the fiscal year. Ignoring these critical factors does not provide an accurate landscape of the impediments divisions faced with their quarterly targets and it prematurely ignores the process in place for identifying these challenges and addressing them at the executive level.

Monetary Impact: Unsupported Questioned Costs totaling \$2,203,479.76

Management **disagrees** with the Monetary Impact and its amount in total.

We disagree that allocating resources to support mail screening for high profile and high-risk security events was not the most effective use of resources to support our mission. Reference our response to Recommendation 1.

The following are our comments for each of the five recommendations:

Recommendation 1:

We recommend the **Chief Postal Inspector** discontinue supporting events that do not directly support the Postal Inspection Service's mission, reassess the allocation of personnel, and provide oversight of divisions' use of resources.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management **disagrees** with Recommendation 1.

Dangerous Mail Investigations (DMI) mail screening at prominent events directly supports the Postal Inspection Service's mission to protect USPS infrastructure, employees, and customers from illegal or dangerous use of the mails. Mail screening is not a new development; it has historically been part of our mission because mail is "live" until it is delivered to its intended recipient. These activities are conducted under established authority in 39 C.F.R. § 233.11 and the Postal Inspection Service's Inspection Service Manual § 5.7.7.4, which together set the circumstances and guardrails for screening.

Requests to conduct screening at high-profile events come from event organizers, who are postal customers, and other law enforcement agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security. Most of these screenings are driven by national security interests to protect the mail against CBRNE threats. These requests undergo a structured vetting process within the relevant division and the DMI Program before being submitted to the Chief Postal Inspector for approval. During National Special Security Events like the Super Bowl, postal inspectors coordinate delivery operations through potential hazards to ensure mail service continues

without unreasonable delays, while maintaining real-time liaison with partner agencies.

The report also did not explore a cost benefit analysis for private specialized mail screening service companies.

Target Implementation Date:

N/A

Responsible Official:

N/A

Recommendation 2:

We recommend the **Inspector in Charge, Communications, Governance, and Strategy**, update the strategic plan to ensure that all strategic goals have measurable key performance indicators.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management **agrees** with Recommendation 2.

The Inspector in Charge for the Communications, Governance & Strategy Group will update the *U.S. Postal Inspection Service Strategic Plan* for FY 2025 - FY 2027 to ensure all strategic goals have measurable key performance indicators.

Target Implementation Date: 12/31/2025

Responsible Official:

Inspector in Charge, Communications, Governance & Strategy

Recommendation 3:

We recommend the **Inspector in Charge, Communications, Governance, and Strategy**, update instructions for developing performance measures and instruct preparers to revise key performance indicators, and division objectives to be specific, measurable, actionable, reasonable, and timely.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management **disagrees** with Recommendation 3.

The proposed directive is unnecessarily prescriptive and not required to achieve effective performance management across the Strategic Plan, Comprehensive Group Plans (CGPs), and Comprehensive Division Plans (CDPs). As stated throughout the audit, CDPs are neither a strategy nor plan. They are tools to assist divisions to align their activities with the Strategic Plan. Our current governance and

planning processes already require divisions to propose objectives with performance indicators that are measurable, subject to time constraints, and have clear definitions, data sources, owners, and reporting schedules. Imposing new instructions that mandate a single prescriptive formula would be redundant to these controls, could constrain operational flexibility across the organization, and risks creating conflicting guidance.

Target Implementation Date:

N/A

Responsible Official:

N/A

Recommendation 4:

We recommend the **Inspector in Charge, Communications, Governance, and Strategy**, revise the High Security Collection Box and High Security Electronic Locks installation performance measures to include metrics within Postal Inspection Service's control.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management **disagrees** with Recommendation 4.

The goals for installing the High Security Collection Box and High Security Electronic Locks are enterprise activities managed and funded by USPS, relying on vendors and operations outside the Postal Inspection Service's control. This strategic goal is designed to provide a solution through the combined effort of the USPS and the Postal Inspection Service. Our Strategic Plan intentionally treats these installation measures as interconnected USPS metrics and pairs them with Postal Inspection Service-controlled indicators, along with milestones that track USPS's progress through joint governance. Creating separate Postal Inspection Service metrics would misrepresent control and accountability.

Target Implementation Date:

N/A

Responsible Official:

N/A

Recommendation 5:

We recommend the **Deputy Chief Inspector, Eastern Area, and Deputy Chief Inspector, Western Area**, establish internal controls to obtain periodic updates prior to the end of the quarter to ensure required quarterly and annual goals are met.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Management **disagrees** with Recommendation 5.

The Deputy Chief Inspectors (DCIs) for Eastern and Western Field Operations already employ internal controls to monitor and drive division performance through the established CDP process. This process requires divisions to set annual goals and document the results, in addition to the individual goal setting and performance evaluation process. DCIs and Inspectors in Charge have processes in place to identify obstacles toward meeting annual goals. As part of this process, DCIs and respective Field Inspectors in Charge (INC) have specific touchpoints to specifically discuss progress on CDPs and develop a plan to ensure the goals within the CDP are met by the end of the fiscal year. Given these existing mechanisms, additional internal controls are unnecessary.

Target Implementation Date:

N/A

Responsible Official:

N/A



Gary R. Barksdale
Chief Postal Inspector

cc: Corporate Audit & Response Management

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE



Contact us via our [Hotline](#) and [FOIA](#) forms. Follow us on social networks. Stay informed.

1735 North Lynn Street, Arlington, VA 22209-2020
(703) 248-2100

For media inquiries, please email press@uspsoig.gov or call (703) 248-2100