



# Report in Brief

September 10, 2020

## Background

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) Joint Polar Satellite System (JPSS) collects temperature and moisture data from satellites viewing the Earth from a height of approximately 512 miles. Environmental data collected by the satellites are critical inputs for weather models' 3- to 7-day forecasts, which help provide early warnings of significant weather and enable emergency managers to make timely decisions that protect lives and property.

The JPSS program (Program) is a collaboration between NOAA and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). NOAA provides funding and retains overall responsibility and authority for development and operations of the entire Program. NASA manages the acquisition and development of the satellites (spacecraft and instruments) and launch services.

## Why We Did This Review

Our objective was to assess the cost, schedule, and technical performance of the Program's acquisition and development effort for selected instruments. To satisfy our audit objective, we determined the extent to which costs and schedules changed from original project baselines, and identified challenges to the projects' technical baseline.

## NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

### The Joint Polar Satellite System: Cost Growth and Schedule Delay of a Key Instrument Acquisition Highlight the Need for Closer Attention to Contractor Oversight

OIG-20-047-A

## WHAT WE FOUND

We found the following:

1. The Program exceeded contract definitization timelines and conducted late and abbreviated baseline reviews.
2. JPSS-2 Cross-track Infrared Sounder quality assurance did not adequately integrate contract risks into its surveillance activities.
3. Award-fee determinations did not motivate the contractor toward exceptional performance.

In addition, as a part of one of these findings, we identified \$14,354,642 in potential funds that could be put to better use.

## WHAT WE RECOMMEND

We recommend that the NOAA Deputy Undersecretary for Operations do the following:

1. Require programs notify the Joint Agency Program Management Council before NOAA-funded NASA contracts exceed definitization timelines.
2. Require a Joint Agency Program Management Council assessment before an Integrated Baseline Review requirement is removed, abridged, or its timing adjusted, for NOAA-funded NASA contracts or major contract modifications requiring earned value management.

We recommend that the NOAA Assistant Administrator for Satellite and Information Services do the following:

3. Ensure the Program adequately incorporates contract risks and executes prevention-focused surveillance as part of its quality assurance activities.

We recommend that the NOAA Assistant Administrator for Satellite and Information Services coordinate with the Director of the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center to do the following:

4. Conduct a joint review of contractor performance evaluation practices and determine whether changes could more effectively motivate contractors to achieve desired outcomes for ongoing and future contract negotiations on NOAA-funded projects.
5. Establish a working definition of "significant" cost overrun to help inform strategies that progressively motivate contractors to improve before accumulating excessive cost and schedule performance deficits, for ongoing and future NOAA-funded NASA contracts.