



U.S. Department of Commerce ★ Office of Inspector General

Report Highlights

Evaluation of the Management and Oversight of the Class B Ship Acquisition Program by NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations

Evaluation Report OIG-26-014-I

April 2, 2026

➤ **What We Evaluated** | Our objective was to assess the management and oversight of the Class B ship acquisition by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO).

➤ **Why This Matters** | OMAO is overseeing the construction of new ships, known as Class B ships, to replace hydrographic survey ships that are nearing the end of their planned service lives.

Shipbuilding is a complex, multistage industrial process that requires structured oversight and controls at each phase. If the existing hydrographic survey ships are not replaced on time, NOAA has estimated a loss of 90 to 100 percent of its charting and mapping capability for the country's Pacific Islands and Tropical Pacific and West Coast regions by 2028.

➤ **What We Found** | We found that OMAO's acquisition planning did not fully account for the resources, requirements, and processes that are necessary to perform Government Contract Quality Assurance (GCQA) management and oversight tasks for a new shipbuilding program.

Specifically, for its Class B ship construction, OMAO (1) did not fully develop and implement the necessary controls to conduct GCQA, (2) did not identify or develop the necessary personnel, skills, and experience to conduct GCQA, and (3) did not have a system or method to record and track quality deficiencies and observations. Correcting these issues is critical to ensure that the ship construction meets contract requirements and an acceptable level of quality.

➤ **What We Recommend** | We made five recommendations to help OMAO implement its quality assurance program for ship construction, address shortfalls in workforce planning and technical oversight, and ensure that quality assurance oversight metrics during ship construction are tracked and stored. NOAA concurred with our recommendations and is working to implement them.