Evaluation of NIST's Management of the National Vulnerability Database

Evaluation Report OIG-26-020-I
May 26, 2026

➤ **What We Audited |** Our objective was to evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of the National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST's) processes for managing cybersecurity vulnerabilities submitted to the National Vulnerability Database (NVD), including the long-term effectiveness of NIST's strategy for reducing its vulnerability backlog and its measures to prevent future processing delays.

➤ **Why This Matters |** The NVD provides crucial data to cybersecurity professionals in the public and private sectors. Through a process called enrichment, NVD analysts update vulnerability records with actionable information that cybersecurity professionals use to prioritize and remediate the vulnerabilities in software and systems. Timely NVD enrichment is essential to defend against cyber threats. A backlog of unprocessed vulnerabilities began in February 2024 and has continued to grow, undermining the NVD's utility and public trust.

➤ **What We Found |** NIST considers the NVD a key piece of the U.S. cybersecurity infrastructure, but its actions to resolve the growing backlog do not reflect that characterization. Specifically, we found:

- NIST's lack of strategic planning and decisive action have allowed the backlog of unprocessed vulnerabilities to continue growing.
- NIST must improve the efficiency of enrichment processes to ensure sustainability. We estimate that NIST could put approximately $800,000 to better use over the next 2 years.
- NIST and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency are operating two vulnerability enrichment programs with significant overlap, which has led to duplicated efforts and wasted approximately $200,000 since May 2024.
- NIST's insufficient communication has frustrated stakeholders and decreased confidence in the NVD.

➤ **What We Recommend |** We made six recommendations to help NIST manage and establish priorities for the NVD, improve the efficiency and sustainability of enrichment processes, and ensure the best use of government resources. NIST concurred with our recommendations and is working to implement them.