

Executive Summary

The Office of Research and Development (ORD) has taken the arrival of the millennium as an opportunity to reassess itself. Over the last two years, building on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Strategic Plan and ORD's two previous strategic plans, we have developed a clear and strong strategic direction that will guide us through the next decade. This *Strategic Plan* reaffirms our commitment to providing the best quality science possible in support of a clean and safe environment and provides the roadmap for how we will achieve each of the five organizational goals that we believe collectively define our aspirations and purpose. It also describes how our research priorities align with and support EPA's Strategic Goals.

ORD's mission is **to conduct leading-edge research and foster the sound use of science and technology to fulfill EPA's mission to protect human health and safeguard the natural environment**. This mission commits ORD to conduct its research in a way that will have a direct and meaningful impact on EPA's decisions and programs. To determine how best to fulfill this mission in a world of new and increasingly complex environmental issues, we built upon our previously published 1996 Strategic Plan and its 1997 update by holding numerous discussions with: customers in the EPA programs and regions; stakeholders in the research and environmental protection communities including organizations at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels; and, most important of all, our staff. These discussions provided valuable insights into emerging trends and helped us to refine our goals, develop the actions under each goal, and create appropriate measures of success.

This *Plan* describes ORD's organizational goals and the actions we will take over the next decade to achieve these goals. In achieving these goals, we will ensure that our science continues to be of high quality, timely, relevant, and responsive. Our *Strategic Plan* does not alter our research priorities, which are the product of a careful and comprehensive Agency-wide planning process. Instead, it focuses on ORD as an organization

and serves as the roadmap for how we will work together and organize our activities over the next 10 years to more efficiently and effectively support EPA's mission. Rather than concentrating on *what* research we will do, it sets direction for *how* we will accomplish our mission.

ORD has established five strategic organizational goals to meet the challenges of the future. First and foremost, ORD seeks to support EPA's mission by providing high-quality, relevant, responsive, and timely science (Goal 1). This means that ORD must ensure that a balanced program of *problem-driven* and *core research* is always guided by the principles of "science for a purpose" and clearly serves the expressed needs of our internal customers in the program and regional offices.

To accomplish Goal 1, ORD must be a high-performing organization (Goal 2). We are committed to the growth and development of our staff and the continuous improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of our organization and infrastructure.



For ORD to support EPA’s mission effectively, our staff and our organization must exercise leadership in the broader scientific community (Goal 3). We will do this by participating in scientific meetings, serving on professional committees, contributing to scientific debate, and playing a leading role in creating a national environmental research agenda. These activities will keep us abreast of cutting-edge science and provide us with the scientific foundation necessary for effective environmental protection.

Integration (Goal 4) addresses ORD’s unique role—our ability to synthesize the broadest range of cutting-edge science and engineering into a comprehensive set of insights and an understanding of the increasingly complex environmental problems that we face. It means integrating across disciplines, scales of time, media, and location to provide decision-makers with a comprehensive picture of the risks posed and the opportunities for preventing or mitigating those risks.

Anticipating future environmental issues (Goal 5) represents our role in long-term environmental stewardship. To meet this Goal, we must foresee and react to environmental challenges before adverse effects materialize or are widely noticed. This foresight will allow us more time to perform the necessary research and put into place the appropriate response before costs become prohibitive or effects irreversible.

ORD’s *Strategic Plan* does not exist in a vacuum. It is bounded by and connected to other planning activities in ORD and EPA. Within the planning, budgeting, and accountability framework established by EPA’s Strategic Plan, ORD develops its research priorities through an extensive annual planning process that includes input from our customers in EPA’s program and regional offices. The result is a portfolio of research spanning the major elements of EPA’s work and is reflected in ORD’s Annual Performance Plan and budget justification. Recently, ORD initiated a “multi-year” planning process as a way to link its Annual Plan both to the longer-range objectives contained in the EPA

Strategic Plan and to the commitments made under the *Government Performance and Results Act of 1993* (GPRA). Our *Plan* also discusses our risk-based planning approach and demonstrates the linkage of our research program to Agency Goals.

ORD has developed this *Strategic Plan* as a path between our past and our future. The scientific priorities identified in our two previous Strategic Plans and the current EPA Strategic Plan still hold true. Over the next decade, we will carefully, consistently, and diligently implement this *Strategic Plan*, action by action, throughout ORD. An extensive effort is already underway to prepare a detailed implementation plan describing our priorities for action, available resources, timelines, and methods for ensuring accountability. We will track our results, measure our progress, and make mid-course adjustments as necessary to reflect changing conditions and new opportunities as they arise. We will report our results to our customers and stakeholders regularly and learn from other organizations as we go. In so doing, we will hold ourselves accountable to each other, and to our customers and stakeholders, for achieving our goals and future success.

