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OMB Moves to Improve the Quality and Credibility of Government Science

OMB released a final government-wide "bulletin" today aimed at enhancing the practice of peer review of governmental science documents including science reports that play an important role in Federal regulation. The Peer Review Bulletin is one aspect of a larger OMB effort to improve the quality of the scientific information upon which policy decisions are based.

Peer review is one of the important procedures used to ensure that the quality of published information meets the standards of the scientific and technical community. It involves an exchange of judgments about the appropriateness of methods and the strength of the author's inferences. Peer review entails critical review of a draft report by qualified specialists who were not involved in the original drafting of the report.

"Peer review is a constructive tool to help agencies produce strong, effective policies by improving the credibility of the underlying science," said OIRA Administrator John D. Graham.

The bulletin defines a peer review planning process that will permit the public and scientific societies to contribute to agency dialogue about which scientific reports merit especially rigorous peer review.

The OMB bulletin, prepared in collaboration with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, provides guidance to Federal agencies on:

- selecting qualified experts (i.e., those with the appropriate knowledge, skills, and experience),
- ensuring the experts are truly independent of the agency, and
- evaluating the reviewers' possible financial conflicts of interest (e.g., ties to regulated businesses).

A copy of the bulletin, which was refined based on two rounds of public comment and an open workshop at the National Academy of Sciences, is available on OMB's web site at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/infereg/infopoltech.html>.

For more information please contact OMB Communications at 202-395-7254.

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