



ORD's Office of Science Policy

Factsheet

The Office of Science Policy (OSP) in EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) serves as the link between ORD's research laboratories and centers, and EPA's regulatory and other programs. OSP integrates and communicates scientific information generated by or for ORD's laboratories and centers, as well as ORD's expert advice on the use of scientific information. EPA and the scientific community at large use this information to ensure that EPA's decisions and environmental policies are informed by sound science.

EPA functions as both a scientific and regulatory agency in the United States. Research conducted by and for ORD provides the basis for the formulation of environmental policies and programs. OSP plays a vital role by providing expert advice and evaluation on the use of scientific knowledge and science policy to support sound science in the Agency. OSP accomplishes this mission by leading efforts in science integration, coordination, and communication across ORD, and between ORD and the Agency's programs, regions, and external parties.

OSP's science integration efforts include:

- Developing unified ORD positions on the use of science in regulations and policies.
- Managing the ORD research planning process.
- Providing implementation strategies for Agency-wide science policies.

OSP's science coordination activities include:

- Bringing ORD and the 10 EPA regions together to address critical science issues.
- Leading the Agency-wide effort to ensure that ORD's research program addresses the Agency's priorities.
- Facilitating access to scientists in ORD laboratories and centers for input in Agency regulations and policies.

OSP's science communication responsibilities include:

- Representing ORD to tribal, state, and local communities.
- Sponsoring external and internal colloquia, workshops, and scientific meetings on topical science issues.

Science Integration

OSP plays a key role in helping ORD focus its research and development on the greatest risks to people and the environment. To set the direction and priorities for its work, ORD involves all parts of EPA. OSP leads this cross-Agency involvement in setting the research agenda by coordinating the development of the **Multi-Year Plans (MYPs)**. The purpose of the MYPs is to provide a framework integrating research across ORD's laboratories and centers and Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) goals in support of EPA's mission to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment. The MYPs identify long-term goals, and present annual performance goals (APGs) and associated annual performance measures (APMs) for a planning window of approximately 5-10 years.

OSP also promotes and tracks ORD's implementation of the **ORD Strategic Plan**. One of ORD's strategic goals, "Anticipating Future Environmental Issues" or simply "Futures," is a new area for ORD, and OSP staff are leading several efforts to build capacity across ORD and EPA to find ways to identify those "weak signals" that may indicate future environmental impacts. Whether it is planning next year's research activities, mapping out our scientific agenda into the coming decade, or scanning the horizon for the environmental issues that will face future generations, OSP serves as the organizational compass to keep ORD's research direction aligned with the Agency's mission.

Science Coordination

OSP has responsibility for several activities to obtain regional input concerning critical science issues, to ensure ORD's research program addresses the Agency's priorities, and to facilitate access to scientists in ORD laboratories and centers for input in EPA regulations and policies. OSP manages the Regional Science Program, which was created to link ORD's research program with EPA's regional offices. The objectives of the program are to: (1) address priority regional science issues, (2) make ORD science available for regional assessments and decisions, and (3) build networks and partnerships between the regions and ORD. This program supports a Regional Science Liaison (RSL) in each of the 10 regions. The RSLs identify high-priority cross-regional research needs to obtain regional input for ORD's budget planning process. Another component of the Regional Science Program coordinated by OSP is the Regional Applied Research Effort (RARE). This is one of the mechanisms used by ORD to respond to the high-priority, near-term research needs of EPA's regional offices. Annually, each region develops a research topic that is submitted to a specific ORD laboratory/center for processing as an extramural research proposal. Joint participation by ORD researchers and regional staff, throughout the process, enhances communication and coordination between EPA's research staff and the users of that research in EPA regional offices.

OSP facilitates ORD's program support function, which provides information and expert judgement to program and regional offices to assist staff dealing with scientific issues in Agency regulatory activities. The main goal of the program support function is to constructively advise the programs and regions on using the best available scientific information during the development of regulations, policies, and guidance. The Program Support Staff help to ensure that ORD provides timely and value-added input and speaks with one clear voice at the appropriate time in the regulatory review process.

Science Communication

An important OSP function is to foster relationships between ORD and other organizations in the communication and use of scientific information. EPA has a special relationship with the Native American tribes, and OSP serves as ORD's lead office for addressing science issues in Indian Country. OSP works with the EPA Tribal Science Council to identify the scientific issues of importance to the tribes so that these issues can be considered in the Agency's research planning process. Because some environmental problems may disproportionately impact specific groups of people, OSP supports ORD's relationship with EPA's National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) to better understand the distribution of environmental exposures and risks across population groups. These and other partnerships forged by OSP are not just important to ORD; they help define ORD's contribution to the Agency's mission, and shape the advancement of its research program.

To facilitate the communication of ORD science, OSP sponsors colloquia, workshops, and scientific meetings on topical science issues. For example, OSP sponsors Regional Science Topic Workshops to address the science issues of greatest interest to the regions. Each year, the EPA regions identify priority science topics for these workshops, which are intended to establish a better cross-Agency understanding of the science applicable to the specific region-selected human health and/or ecological topic. They also foster a network of EPA scientists who will continue to exchange information on these topics as EPA moves forward in planning education, research, and risk management programs.

For more information on ORD's Office of Science Policy and its programs and activities, visit the OSP Web Site listed above.

The unique role of OSP has resulted in an ORD-wide focus on meeting the needs of ORD's internal and external customers to enhance the use of sound science in the Agency.