



ORD's Office of Science Policy Research Planning Process

Factsheet

As the principal scientific and research arm of the EPA, the Office of Research and Development (ORD) conducts research and fosters the use of science and technology in fulfilling EPA's mission. ORD plans its research through a multi-year planning process that communicates the direction of the research program over the next 5 to 10 years. ORD's Multi-Year Plans (MYPs) describe the long-term goals that will define its success and associated EPA Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) annual performance goals (APGs) and annual performance measures (APMs). Sixteen MYPs have been developed on different research topics, and are updated annually. This process has been designed to effectively include the expertise of the ORD laboratories, centers, and offices, as well as EPA regional and program offices. The following is a short summary of how ORD's research planning process works.

The People

ORD's Office of Science Policy (OSP) has the lead role in coordinating the development of the MYPs. The Planning Coordination Team within the Planning Staff provides information and cross-media support for research planning activities, develops guidance and processes, and provides direction for multi-year and annual planning.

Each MYP writing team has a lead author, assigned by the ORD Executive Council (EC), and a writing team, consisting of members from various laboratories, centers, and program offices, and the Research Coordination Team (RCT) for the corresponding media. The EC also assigns an Executive Guidance Group (EGG), which consists of senior executives. The EGG meets with the writing team throughout the writing and update of the MYPs to ensure that the plan is focused on high-priority science, provides guidance on changes in research direction, and assesses ORD capacity and capabilities. The EGG approves the final version of the MYP for use by ORD and public release.

RCTs participate on the MYP writing teams and use the MYPs to develop annual plans for a given planning year. The RCTs are each led by an OSP Media Manager and coordinated by an OSP Theme Planner. Each RCT includes media experts from each ORD laboratory and center (Assistant Laboratory or Center Director, commonly known as ALD or ACD), as well as representatives from the associated program office and the lead region. The RCTs also include representation from ORD's Office of Resources Management and Administration (ORMA), which has overall responsibility for ORD's budget.

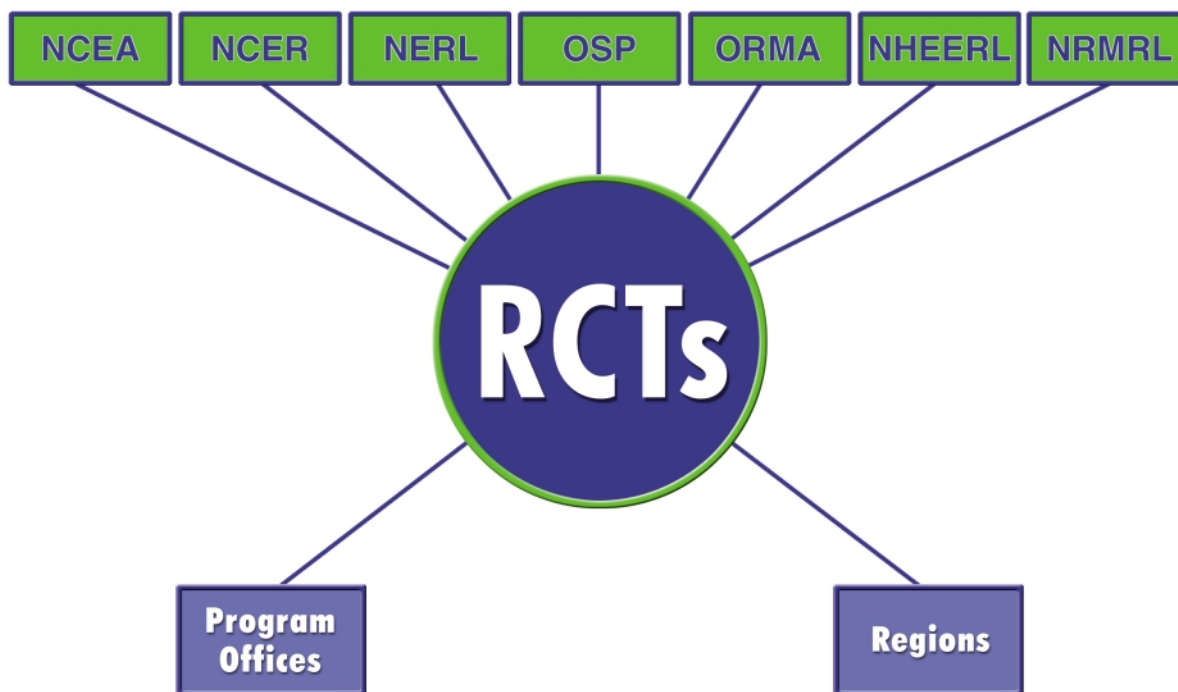
The Process

ORD has developed 16 MYPs that serve as ORD's key planning and communication tool. These documents provide the long-term research focus for a given area of research in the form of specific long-term goals. The MYPs detail the direction of research over a 5-10 year time period and also list the annual performance goals and measures needed to successfully achieve the desired results. The long-term approach outlined in these plans allows for a thorough understanding of the context for annual planning decisions and informs ORD managers of the potential impacts of those decisions on ORD's ability to accomplish its goals on time. Performance and accountability are likewise improved by projecting work in advance and developing ways for ORD to measure its performance. Peer review of the MYPs also helps ensure the quality of ORD's research program by allowing external evaluation of program plans and direction.

The MYPs then are used to make annual planning research allocation decisions. Every fall, each MYP is updated based on changing science needs, new research initiatives, and completed research. Although long-term goals remain relatively unchanged, research emphasis within long-term goals may be modified, and new APGs and APMs are added. The MYP writing teams meet several times to discuss changes to the MYPs, and finally submit them for approval to the appropriate EGG. They are then ready to be used in the annual research planning process.

The RCTs use the MYPs to determine research priorities and develop the annual research program. Proposal development includes distributing resources across long-term goals for both the intramural and extramural (Science To Achieve Results or STAR) programs and developing a priority ranking. Prior to development of the annual planning research activities, RCTs conduct regular conference calls with program and regional customers to enhance communication on ongoing activities, propose new research initiatives, coordinate cross-program and cross-laboratory/center efforts, identify issues, define future programmatic and regulatory directions, and plan scientific meetings. They also participate on the MYP writing teams, working to create a coherent research program with a long-term outlook, which also is used for annual planning. At the end of the annual planning process, OSP provides ORMA with the results from across ORD for use in preparing the annual budget.

Research Coordination Team Structure



For more information on the Research Planning Process, contact Paul Zielinski at (202) 564-6772, or visit the OSP Web Site listed above.