



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

**OFFICE OF THE
INSPECTOR GENERAL**

February 28, 2019

MEMORANDUM TO: Margaret M. Doane
Executive Director for Operations

FROM: Dr. Brett M. Baker */RA/*
Assistant Inspector General for Audits

SUBJECT: STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS: AUDIT OF U.S.
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION'S PROCESS
FOR DEVELOPING AND COORDINATING RESEARCH
ACTIVITIES (OIG-19-A-06)

REFERENCE: DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR MATERIALS,
WASTE, RESEARCH, STATE, TRIBAL, COMPLIANCE,
ADMINISTRATION, AND HUMAN CAPITAL PROGRAMS,
MEMORANDUM DATED JANUARY 30, 2019

Attached is the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) analysis and status of recommendations as discussed in the agency's response dated January 30, 2019. Based on this response, recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 4 are resolved. Please provide an updated status of the resolved recommendations by January 17, 2020.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at (301) 415-5915, or Paul Rades, Team Leader, at (301) 415-6228.

Attachment: As stated

cc: Robert Lewis, OEDO
Diane Jackson, OEDO
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Audit Report

AUDIT OF U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION'S PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING AND COORDINATING RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

(OIG-19-A-06)

Status of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Involve the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research (RES) and requesting office senior managers earlier in the work request development process to ensure work requests are properly understood, resourced, and achievable before they are formally submitted to RES.

Agency Response Dated
January 30, 2019:

The NRC staff agrees with the recommendation. The staff plans to enhance communications with senior office management by conducting program reviews on research activities with the key offices of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, New Reactors, and Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards. Senior managers will gain awareness of the status of ongoing work and plans for new work requests. This will facilitate alignment between the respective offices on the priority, strategic outcomes, schedule, and proposed budgets for research activities. The initial program reviews will be conducted during calendar year 2019 and then annually thereafter. The potential for and resource implications of new work requests will also be brought to the attention of senior office management during the budget formulation process to ensure that the budget request is commensurate with the workload demand.

Target date for completion: December 31, 2019

Audit Report

AUDIT OF U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION'S PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING AND COORDINATING RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

(OIG-19-A-06)

Status of Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (cont.):

OIG Analysis:

The proposed actions meet the intent of the recommendation. OIG will close the recommendation after NRC provides documentation that verifies staff have (1) conducted program reviews on research activities with the key offices of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, New Reactors, and Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards, and (2) updated PRM-001 to include notifying senior office management in RES and the key offices of the potential for, and resource implications of, new work requests during the budget formulation process to ensure that the budget request is commensurate with the workload demand.

Status:

Resolved.

Audit Report

AUDIT OF U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION'S PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING AND COORDINATING RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

(OIG-19-A-06)

Status of Recommendations

Recommendation 2: Implement a standard template for RES staff to use when preparing acceptance memorandum or email responses to all work request types.

**Agency Response Dated
January 30, 2019:**

The staff agrees with the recommendation. A standardized form is under development that will be common to all work request types and will document key information on the scope of the work request, the schedule, the deliverables, and the estimated resources. This single form will enhance the efficiency of the work request process by consolidating information that had previously been separated in a work request and RES response. As such, the form can be concurred upon by the requesting office and RES in a single package, eliminating the need for separate work request and RES response documentation. RES Office Instruction PRM-001, "Process for Responding to Work Requests: Informal Assistance Requests, Feasibility Study Requests, Research Assistance Requests, User Need Requests, and Research Plans," will be updated in accordance with this revised procedure.

Target date for completion: December 31, 2019

OIG Analysis: The proposed actions meet the intent of the recommendation. OIG will close the recommendation after verifying that NRC has implemented the standardized form that will be common to all work request types and will document key information on the scope of the work request, the schedule, the deliverables, and the estimated resources.

Status: Resolved.

Audit Report

AUDIT OF U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION'S PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING AND COORDINATING RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

(OIG-19-A-06)

Status of Recommendations

Recommendation 3: Implement a single agencywide tracking system with the capabilities needed to effectively and efficiently keep the agency aware of research activities.

Agency Response Dated
January 30, 2019:

The NRC staff agrees with the recommendation. The staff plans to enhance the use of the operating plan to track research projects and assess if changes to PRM-001 are needed. The recommendation will be addressed by improving adherence to the requirements, strengthening the culture of operating plan use, and improving the value of the system for managers and staff through performance reporting and monitoring. These changes are intended to improve accuracy and timeliness of reporting and to improve project efficiency, effectiveness, and transparency. Review of operating plan performance will be included as part of standing office management meetings and branch- and division-level counterpart meetings with the requesting offices.

Target date for completion: December 31, 2019

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AUDIT OF U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION'S PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING AND COORDINATING RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

(OIG-19-A-06)

Status of Recommendations

Recommendation 3 (cont.):

OIG Analysis:

The proposed actions meet the intent of the recommendation. OIG will close the recommendation after verifying that NRC has improved adherence to the RES Operating Plan requirements, and conducted performance reporting and monitoring of the operating plan. OIG will also verify that NRC assessed if changes to PRM-001 are needed once staff provides documentation showing they reviewed the operating plan performance as part of standing office meetings and branch- and division-level counterpart meetings with the requesting offices.

Status:

Resolved.

Audit Report

AUDIT OF U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION'S PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING AND COORDINATING RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

(OIG-19-A-06)

Status of Recommendations

Recommendation 4:

Develop and implement a process for obtaining and using feedback from requesting offices. The process should include, but not be limited to, guidance on obtaining feedback during interim project milestones, creating access controls, and delineating roles and responsibilities.

Agency Response Dated
January 30, 2019:

The staff agrees with the recommendation and will establish access controls for the survey site and will add supporting information in a desk guide as part of PRM-001 that describes the roles and responsibilities in obtaining and responding to feedback from requesting offices. In addition to surveys, RES benefits from regularly obtaining feedback from program offices, including on interim products, during regularly scheduled user need request status meetings, management meetings, and staff-level counterpart meetings. Staff plans to update PRM-001 to provide guidance on how to sample research products to ensure we receive meaningful feedback of activities across the program throughout the project work cycle.

Target date for completion: December 31, 2019

OIG Analysis:

The proposed actions meet the intent of the recommendation. OIG will close the recommendation after verifying NRC has developed and implemented a process for obtaining and using feedback from requesting offices. The process should include, but not be limited to, guidance on obtaining feedback during interim project milestones, creating access controls, and delineating roles and responsibilities.

Status:

Resolved.