



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

January 16, 2020

MEMORANDUM TO: Dr. Brett M. Baker
Assistant Inspector General for Audits
Office of the Inspector General

FROM: Raymond V. Furstenau **/RA/**
Director of Nuclear Regulatory Research

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

This memorandum responds to your February 28, 2019, request (Agencywide Documents Access and Management System [ADAMS] accession number [ML19059A147](#)) for an update on the status of the recommendations of the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) "Audit of NRC's Process for Developing and Coordinating Research Activities" (OIG-19-A-06) dated December 13, 2018 (ADAMS accession number [ML18347B038](#)).

In this audit report, the OIG makes four recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) coordination and development of research activities through stakeholder engagement, standardization of templates, agencywide tracking, and enhancements to obtaining feedback from the user offices. The enclosure to this memorandum provides the staff's updates to the four audit recommendations.

If you have any questions, please contact the individual identified below.

Enclosure: As Stated

CONTACT: Nicholas J. DiFrancesco, RES
(301) 415-1115

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

In audit report OIG-19-A-06, "Audit of NRC's Process for Developing and Coordinating Research Activities," the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) provided four recommendations to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff for improving the agency's coordination and development of research activities. Below are the OIG's recommendations followed by the NRC staff's responses, including target completion dates.

Recommendation 1:

Involve the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research (RES) and request 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.

Update:

In calendar year 2019, the RES staff led six program reviews with senior office management to enhance coordination and communication on planned research activities. Senior managers gained an increased awareness of ongoing work and plans for future activities. The program review meetings facilitate alignment between RES and the program offices on the priority, strategic outcomes, schedule, and proposed budgets for research activities. RES completed four of these program reviews in November and December 2019, informing senior office management of anticipated resource needs in support of the FY2022 budget formulation process. Resources for the Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards are aligned through division-level interactions as research activities are a small portion of both office's budgets.

The staff plans to revise 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," to update communication roles and responsibilities to support program reviews and budget formulation.

Target Completion Date: March 31, 2020

Contact: Nicholas DiFrancesco, RES/FO, (301) 415-1115

Recommendation 2:

Implement a standard template for RES staff to use when preparing acceptance memorandum or e-mail responses to all work request types.

Update:

The staff has developed a standard template form for all work request types that includes standardized information that documents key information on the scope of the work request, the schedule, the deliverables, and the estimated resources.

The revised concurrence process allows acceptance of research scope in a single package. The standardized form is being placed into the NRC form library as NRC Form 843, Research Work Request.

Enclosure

The staff plans procedure updates to 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," to reflect the use of the enclosure standard form and efficiencies in the concurrence process.

Target Completion Date: March 31, 2020

Contact: Laura Smith, RES/DE, (301) 415-1252

Recommendation 3:

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

Update:

The NRC staff has begun developing a management dashboard to improve adherence to the existing requirements and to provide visibility to managers and staff to support performance reporting and monitoring. The staff has continued the practice of conducting division and branch-level counterpart meetings on status of work requests to discuss milestones and research deliverables. Furthermore, as discussed in Recommendation 1, the staff discusses research priorities at the office-level through the program reviews to support agencywide awareness of activities.

The staff continues to assess if changes to our internal procedures are needed.

Target Completion Date: June 30, 2020

Contact: Daniel Shapiro, RES/PMDA, (301) 415-2922

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.

Update:

The staff has established a new survey site that provides access control of survey results. Write access to the results data is limited to the OCIO administrator. For FY2019, 30 surveys on research products were received using the ticketing process.

The staff plans procedure updates to 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," to reflect roles and responsibilities for the ticketing process and guidance on responsibilities for obtaining and using feedback on interim project milestones and other research work products.

Target Completion Date: March 31, 2020

Contact: Daniel Shapiro, RES/PMDA, (301) 415-2922