



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

July 13, 2020

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

FROM: Raymond V. Furstenau, Director
Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research

SUBJECT: 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)

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's) "Audit of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) Process for Developing and Coordinating Research Activities" (OIG-19-A-06) dated December 13, 2018 (ADAMS accession number [ML18347B038](#)). This letter supplements our prior update letter dated January 16, 2020 ([ML20015A336](#)).

In the audit report, the OIG made four recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the 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 and has completed planned actions.

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 the U.S Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC's) Process for Developing and Coordinating Research Activities," the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) provided four recommendations to the 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.

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.

Update:

In calendar year 2019, the RES staff conducted four 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 NRR on the priority, strategic outcomes, schedule, and proposed budgets for research activities. RES completed these program reviews with the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation between November and December 2019, informing senior office management of anticipated resource needs in support of the FY2022 budget formulation process. RES program reviews for the Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards were conducted at the division director level as research activities in support of the office are a smaller portion of the research budget portfolio.

The staff has revised RES Office Instruction PRM-001, "Process for Developing Work Requests and Coordination of Research Activities," to update communication roles and responsibilities to ensure continuation of these program reviews and their integration with the budget formulation cycle. The latest revision, Revision 3, was formally issued on May 12, 2020.

The public version of the program review materials has also been made available to support external stakeholder dialog and feedback and can be found on the [NRC research activities](#) homepage or under [ADAMS accession No. ML20065K906](#).

Target Completion Date: The staff has completed its planned actions for this recommendation.

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

Recommendation 2:

Implement a standard template for RES staff to use when preparing acceptance memoranda 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 has been placed into the NRC form library as NRC Form 843, Research Work Request.

The staff has revised RES Office Instruction PRM-001, "Process for Developing Work Requests and Coordination of Research Activities," to reflect the use of the standard form and the efficiencies in the concurrence process.

Target Completion Date: The staff has completed its planned actions for this recommendation.

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

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 developed a management dashboard using Microsoft Power BI for the office's Operating Plan 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. Moreover, as discussed in Recommendation 1, the staff discusses research progress and priorities through the program reviews to support agencywide awareness of activities.

The staff has revised RES Office Instruction PRM-001, "Process for Developing Work Requests and Coordination of Research Activities," to reflect the roles and responsibilities to support data entry with the Operating Plan system.

Target Completion Date: The staff has completed its planned actions for this recommendation.

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 and RES Program Management, Policy Development & Analysis lead analyst. For FY2019, 30 surveys on research products were received using the ticketing process. In FY2020, the system has been fully automated to support the issuance of surveys to the users in the program offices at the completion of specific milestones within each Work Request

The staff has revised RES Office Instruction PRM-001, "Process for Developing Work Requests and Coordination of Research Activities," to reflect roles and responsibilities for obtaining and using feedback on interim project milestones and other research work products.

Target Completion Date: The staff has completed its planned actions for this recommendation.

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