

SOUTH EAST REGION RESEARCH INITIATIVE
Program Review - August 22-23, 2007
Michael Matthews

Program Review - Purpose:

The purpose of this program review is to improve projects under the SERRI program through a systematic, cyclical review process. The results are meant to be used as a tool toward continuous improvement for the Principal Investigator (PI) and his or her staff, as well as the local project management team at ORNL. This process helps to ensure the PI is on track and schedule with deliverables, milestones, budget, and an array of other related project criteria. The end goal is to provide the public with state-of-the-art products to help safeguard them from natural or man made disasters.

The Process:

The National Program Manager, Michael Matthews, worked closely with the ORNL team to ensure evaluators were cognizant of review requirements and expectations. He provided guidance on the entire end-to-end review process as well as various standardized templates to be used for maximum efficiency, consistency, and standardization. These were all used.

The Government Team:

The national program manager assembled a diverse team of independent evaluators to review, evaluate, and score the proposals. The evaluators were:

Jalal Mapar	DHS, S&T, Program Manager, Infrastructure Geophysical Division
Justin Legary	DHS, S&T, Program Manager, Infrastructure Geophysical Division
Milagros Kennett	FEMA, Architect/Project Manager Risk Management Series Mitigation Division, Building Science and Technology
Merrick Krause	DHS, OIP, Director, Infrastructure Analysis & Strategy Division, Office of Infrastructure Protection
John Voeller	OSTP, Consultant
Andrew Bruzewicz	USACE, Program Manager, Emergency Management, International
Mike Matthews	DHS, &T IGD, Program Analyst/Meteorologist

This panel of evaluators brought with them extensive backgrounds of knowledge to draw upon from their various government agencies. Furthermore, two panel members were

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Infrastructure & Geophysical Division (IGD) customers; Infrastructure Protection and FEMA. Their participation was critical toward ensuring synergy between funded projects by S&T and needs and requirements from the customer.

Additionally, a number of external observers from government agencies and the private sector were invited to learn about these projects and to provide comment and insights to the PIs. These participants shared their thoughts and recommendations and in some cases were able to provide a wider landscape assessment of similar projects and provide opportunities to leverage like projects with complementary technologies.

Scoring The Projects:

The evaluators were provided with advance copies of:

- The original funded proposals
- The project abstracts
- The current power point presentation showing current status and progress

These documents enabled them to compare the project's initial deliverables with the current state of progress and direction. Armed with this information and evaluation sheets, they scored each project independently using the five criterion of:

- Execution
- Technical quality
- Progress
- Coordination
- Project management.

After the review, the program manager collected all of the scoring sheets and comments and scored the projects using standardized categories. The scores are attached to this report for review, recommendation, and action where necessary.

Score	Narrative
1	No progress
2	Poor progress
3	Progress but there are concerns
4	Making satisfactory progress
5	Good progress – no real concerns
6	Excellent progress

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Project Assessment:

This program review served its initial purpose in evaluating the health of the projects:

Of the projects briefed, scores ranged across the five categories - from (3.6 to 5.1).

- Seventy percent (70%) of the scores ranged in the 4.1 to 5.0 range (satisfactory to good progress),
- Twenty five percent (25%) ranged in the 3.1 to 4.0 range (progress with some concerns to satisfactory),
- Five percent (5%) ranged above 5.0 (good to excellent progress).

Because the review shows 75% of the projects performing in the satisfactory to good range, the program's projects are predominantly performing well. Nevertheless, there are small weaknesses that can be improved upon. There are also clear weaknesses in the remaining 25% that need to be corrected.

Having addressed this, the focus of the local management team should not solely be on the projects in obvious need of assistance, but all projects and especially on projects that have demonstrated potential to deliver useful products in the "near" future - if provided additional support and leadership to accelerate their progress.

Recommendations:

I encourage the local ORNL management team to closely review all of the project scores and comments, paying particular attention to the projects scoring 4.0 and below. These scores indicate weaknesses in one or all of the rating categories and the local management team should take remedial actions through a Project Improvement Plan (PIP) and subsequent courses of action to improve the performance of the projects. The ultimate goal is not a one time fix, but rather toward achieving continuous improvement of the projects over their life cycle.

I also recommend a reevaluation of projects that appear to be poised to deliver substantive useful products in the "near term" and provide the necessary support and leadership to effect the rapid transition from development to delivery and deployment.

Projects in the next program review in March of 2008 should be able to demonstrate and validate actions taken by the SERRI ORNL team toward improvements as a result of the findings of this report.