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From: NORAmiddecade (CDC)
Sent: Tuesday, August 30, 2011 6:26 PM
To: NIOSH Docket Office (CDC)
Cc: Helmkamp, James C. (CDC/NIOSH/OD)
Subject: 244 - Request for Information for the Mid Decade Review of NORA

Hi—

I am forwarding the attached comments submitted by Jim Helmkamp, NIOSH. Please contact him if you have questions.
Thanks.



Mid-decade process
interview q...

NORA MID-DECADE PROCESS EVALUATION

Starting in 2006, the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) entered its second decade with an industry-based structure. As we are halfway through the decade, we are interested in your comments on what has worked well and what could be improved in the future. The overall objective of this interview is to review the processes of NORA and collect information on how adjustments can be made to maximize impact through the remainder of the current NORA decade.

The questions are divided into six topics. *Please respond only to the questions for which you feel you can provide useful information.* This should take approximately one hour to complete. The final report will focus on content and will not be directly attributable to any individual.

No individual will be identified with any quote. Would you like to have your name and organization included in the appendix of the report? Yes
 No

Please provide some background information about your involvement in NORA.

A. Type of membership

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sector Council Manager | <input type="checkbox"/> Corresponding member (Government) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sector Council Coordinator (Government) | <input type="checkbox"/> Corresponding member (Non-government) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sector Council Coordinator (Non-government) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sector Council Assistant Coordinator | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sector Council Member (Government) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sector Council Member (Non-government) | |

B. Industry sector

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare and Social Assistance | <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mining | <input type="checkbox"/> Oil and Gas Extraction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wholesale and Retail Trade | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities |

C. Type of organization

- NIOSH
 Other government agency
 Labor/Unions
 Industry/Employers
 Academia
 Other research organization
 Non profit organization
 Other

NORA was started in 1996 and entered its second decade in 2006. How long have you been involved with NORA and how did your involvement start?

July 2009; assigned TWU Coordinator responsibilities at that time

OVERALL NORA (*Assessment of the structure of the overall NORA effort*)

1. Is NORA contributing to an improvement in the relevance and national impact of occupational safety and health research overall? If so, how? If not, why not?

Yes, but only peripherally because I don't think the concept of NORA is well known outside (NIOSH) except by the several hundred council and corresponding members who have contributed to the development of sector agendas and/or are involved in funded projects. It is probably inappropriate to group relevance and impact together. While those involved with NORA will opine that NORA certainly is important to the national OSH agenda, those who don't know NORA will ask what it is. On the other hand, has NORA had outputs and products that have impacted national OSH? ... some certainly will argue that such is the case through papers, presentations, development and adoption of new policies and procedures, patents, etc. The bigger question is, has NORA contributed to fewer occupational deaths, illness and injuries and their associated economic costs...that is hard to say. Is impact measured by the number of strategic/research goals achieved or retired?

2. During the first decade of NORA, NORA was organized into 21 priority areas of injuries/illnesses and methods. In the second decade, NORA is organized into ten industry sectors. Based on your experience, how has the sector-based approach affected the ability of NORA to address occupational safety and health issues?

I cannot answer this as I was not involved with NORA in its first decade and do not know how successful NORA was in terms of reaching established goals and objectives. It has never been clearly articulated to me why the original approach to NORA was changed after 10-years.

3. How do you think NORA should balance attention between basic occupational safety and health research and the translation of that research into the workplace? Do you think this is being done?

I believe there should be an equal balance. Only until recently has the translational/r2p piece been required in LOI preparation and proposal development. This is critical if research products/outputs are to be useful in the workplace.

4. Do you think NORA adequately addresses both short and long term occupational safety and health needs? Why or why not?

I don't know. Do we in NIOSH even know what the national short- and long-term OSH needs are? How do we define short- and long-term needs? WSO recently conducted a needs assessment of short and long-term OSH needs for the Western States and respondents listed the same things on both lists.

INPUTS: STAKEHOLDERS (*Assessment of the structure and organization of sector councils*)

5. What are the drivers and barriers to your involvement on the council?

Personally, when I started at NIOSH in 2009, I did not have a background in TWU-related research, nor do I have one now. Although I have a strong research background and epidemiological skills, my position as the Sector Coordinator is largely administrative. I feel that TWU leadership should be located in a DLO that has scientists who are conducting relevant TWU-related research. Currently, WSO is not that DLO.

Did the sector-based approach affect your involvement? If so, how?

No, I had no choice about my involvement in TWU.

6. Council structure includes sector leadership, types of organizations represented, number of members, level of engagement, and types of activities. Has the structure of your council helped or hindered its success? How?

I believe the TWU Sector Council has been somewhat successful over the past two years during my involvement as Sector Coordinator. The TWU sector is made up of three distinct industrial groupings (sub-sectors) – transportation – warehousing – utilities, which have very little in common. And within transportation, council members interested in trucking seemed to isolate themselves from other transportation venues (air, couriers and messengers, ground transit, etc). Thus, it has been difficult to have council meetings that incorporated all three industries. Since we started to have independent sub-sector meetings in July 2010, there seems to be more interest and participation.

There had been some internal discussion within TWU a few years to possibly separate its components into three distinct sectors, but we have not pursued this recently as we perceived that NORA leadership would not be receptive to this after the recent addition of the two new split-off sectors (oil and gas and public safety).

7. How can the internal communications of your council be improved?

More frequent calls between the leadership team and its steering council

How can communications with those not on the council be improved?

Better use of structured conference calls, newsletters

What have been the most successful communication tools?

E-mail has been used most often

8. The charge to sector councils states that the council mission is to develop a research strategic plan and promote adoption of improved workplace practices. At this half-way point, are any changes needed to your council to carry out its charge for the remainder of the decade? If so, what changes?

Many of our strategic/research intermediate and activity output goals were written (none of the current leadership team was involved in their development) 'for employers to incorporate/ensure...that policies and procedures were adopted to...' The way these goals were written, NIOSH has no ownership in these types of goals nor can progress/success be measured. NORA leadership was quite reluctant for TWU to wholly remove over 1/3 of our goals that were

written like this. Thus, in my opinion a re-structuring of the TWU council would not likely increase the probably of success of its research agenda.

INPUTS: RESOURCES *(Assessment of whether the needs of councils have been met)*

9. Resources include, but are not limited to funding, unique expertise, and network connections. What resources contributed to your council's successes? **Dedicated scientists**

Where did those resources come from? **Internal to NIOSH**

10. To ensure that the desired impacts of NORA are achieved by 2016, are there additional resources that your council needs? If so, what are they?

More resources with a portion of those specifically dedicated to scientists/organizations outside NIOSH. The external portion should be competitive (say at the small project level) where each sector would be given a certain amount of funds to develop its own call for proposals, rank submissions, award funds, and monitor progress. Council members and corresponding members outside NIOSH need some type of 'carrot' to stay engaged in the NORA process.

All future (NORA) requests for proposals must be driven by the priority goals that each sector established in mid-2010. If LOIs are submitted without addressing these, then they should be deemed 'not responsive' and the PO would not be invited to develop a proposal.

Where should they come from? **Philanthropic organizations, external partners**

ACTIVITIES: DEVELOPMENT OF THE SECTOR STRATEGIC AGENDA / GOALS

(Assessment of the setting of goals and prioritization, which was some of the early work of councils)

11. Was the process of developing sector-based goals valuable? Why or why not? Did you gain anything from this process that helped in your work in OSH? If yes, please describe. If not, why not?

I was not involved in the development of the TWU Strategic/Research Agenda. I find the approved version (Aug 2009) way too long, with many intermediate goals and AOGs written in a way that is sometimes confusing ... and directed at employers ... such that they will likely never be accomplished. I feel no ownership of the TWU agenda; I inherited it, so I find it sometimes difficult to get excited about it and encourage internal and external scientists to address it. I must say however, that I thoroughly enjoy working with the few NIOSH scientists who have addressed TWU goals and been successful in obtaining funding.

12. What barriers were encountered during the process of developing your goals?

What facilitated the process of developing your goals?

I do not have any knowledge about this process.

13. How likely is it that your sector goals will need to be modified based on current and expected availability of resources? If there is a good likelihood, what modifications do you think are needed? If not, why not?

We should be given the authority and opportunity to trim/rework the TWU agenda to remove/revise goals that clearly are not in the purview of NIOSH to accomplish. Those goals that

state 'employers will incorporate...' are in this category and will likely not be addressed in the final years of NORAs second decade.

14. Do the goals of your sector adequately prioritize the needs for research and prevention activities? Why or why not?

For the time being, our list of 5 priority AOGs is sufficient; however this list should be re-visited annually and possibly expanded to at least 10 AOGs rather than 5.

ACTIVITIES: IMPLEMENTATION (*Assessment of the activities to accomplish goals, which was the focus of most councils after completion of goals development*)

15. Has your council turned its focus towards achievement of the identified goals?

If so, what is going well? What could be improved?

If not, what is the current focus? Do you project that the council will eventually focus on achieving the identified goals? If no, why not?

The current round of five FY12 NORA TWU-related proposals all addressed top priority AOGs identified in July 2009; a few of these have a good chance to receive funding.

I have been tracking a variety of outputs (papers, presentations, abstracts, reports) by TWU Council and Corresponding Members who have directly or indirectly addressed TWU intermediate goals and AOGs and have posted a matrix on the TWU website summarizing these for the period 2006 to present (NORAs second decade).

16. Do you know of any challenges to the development of partnerships to conduct research relevant to NORA goals? If so, what are the challenges?

Keeping partners engaged is a challenge. I get the feeling (though not directly articulated from partners) that they want something for their time and involvement...'what's in it for us...' The carrot and stick approach.

I do not know the TWU field very well and do not feel comfortable reaching out to organizations that I know little about or are familiar with what they do. As a result, I have been both reluctant and reticent to identify and engage new partners and sometimes communicate with current partners.

17. Research to practice activities include, but are not limited to, outputs, meetings, presentations, networking, and initiation and use of new partnerships among stakeholders. How effective has NORA been in generating goals-related research to practice (r2p) activities from NIOSH? From partners? Why?

This has been somewhat addressed previously in Questions 3 and 15. R2P is more of an internal NIOSH requirement and much less so, in my opinion, for partners. R2P and translation may be a criteria related to external competitive NORA projects, but I do not know that for sure.

I believe the list of TWU-related outputs, as discussed earlier and posted on our web page attest, that the sector has been successful in getting information and results out using a variety of venues. TWU currently hosts a NIOSH transportation twitter site that has over 1,000 followers.

RESULTS *(Assessment of the future)*

18. Impact is defined as contributing to a safer and healthier workplace. What activities and products have been completed or are in progress that you believe have or will have the most impact?

Were these impacts identified in the sector goals or were they unanticipated?

This goes back to the previous question as well as to question 1, where in many instances it is very difficult to measure or assess impact. You can measure hits on a website or downloads of specific documents or citations of a journal article...but as a contributing factor to making a workplace safer and healthier...this is problematic at best.

19. Are there barriers to NORA having a positive impact by 2016? If so, what are they? What can be done to reduce the barriers?

Again, how does one measure impact – quality or quantity? One definition or paradigm does not fit all sectors.

Planning has begun now to enable a very broad assessment of NORA in 2016; the approach must engage both council and corresponding members, partners (NIOSH, other government agencies, Labor/Unions, Industry/Employers, Academia, Other research organizations, Non profit organizations) and the general public to fully evaluate NORA and its outcomes. The Logic model approach may be a starting point, but there has to be much more...such as a comprehensive (GAO-approved) survey-questionnaire, or an announcement in the Federal Register soliciting comments.

20. Do you feel your involvement has been worth your time and effort? Why or why not?

Yes, for the most part. From an administrative and management perspective, I believe I have done satisfactorily...but I from a TWU science/research perspective, not so well.

Do you have additional comments on what is going well or how improvements can be made? No

Thank you for your time and thoughts.