

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION		Number: 3111-001
SUBJECT: Departmental Long-Range IRM Planning	DATE: February 2, 1989	
	OPI: Planning, Review and Standards Division, Office of Information Resources Management	

1 PURPOSE

This regulation establishes policy, procedures, requirements, and responsibilities of the Department and its agencies participating in the USDA long-range strategic information resources management (IRM) planning process. The terms "agency" or "agencies" used throughout this regulation include USDA agencies and staff offices.

2 SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS/CANCELLATIONS

DR 3111-001 dated April 2, 1984 is hereby superseded.

3 POLICY

Long-range strategic IRM plans will be prepared by and for each agency and by the Office of Information Resources Management (OIRM) for the Department as a whole. Each annual planning cycle, on a Departmentwide basis, agencies will undertake strategic IRM planning and produce an annual agency IRM plan. OIRM will produce a Departmental-level USDA IRM plan every other year.

A current, approved agency IRM plan is prerequisite for Departmental approval of any proposed major IRM related acquisitions and for obtaining any degree of earned autonomy from the Department. Such earned autonomy will remain in force only so long as agency plans each year retail their approved status. An approved plan does not exempt the agency from compliance with the Department's technical approval regulations.

Agency IRM plans will be based on agency program an administrative requirements and will follow the directions of Departmental guidance including IRM goals, objectives, strategies, assumptions as defined by the Department in its formal guidance document governing Departmentwide strategic IRM planning. The USDA IRM plan will draw on information in the regular agency IRM plans along with any other information relevant to IRM in the Department.

4 DEFINITIONS

a Information Resources. All of the data, information, and information facilities, sources, services, staff resources, products and systems that are useful to an organization in meeting its information requirements. Information itself is the primary information resource; all other information resources are secondary to it.

b Information Resources Management. That aspect of general management that deals with the utilization of information and other information resources and is concerned with the acquisition, processing, communication, and retention of information. It embraces and employs specific disciplines such as automated information processing, data administration, telecommunications, office automation, and records and paperwork management; but it extends beyond all of these to include the flow, use, and responsibility for information throughout the organization.

c Long-Range Strategic (IRM) Planning/Plan. This type of planning and the plans it produces is planning for IRM functions across an entire organization the Department or each of its agencies -- over a 5-year timeframe. In the context of this regulation and related planning documents the phrase "long-range strategic IRM plan (or planning)" may be alternatively referred to as "strategic IRM plan," "long-range IRM plan," "IRM plan," or simply "plan." The purpose for strategic planning of any kind is to direct and guide the organization into an advantageous position for meeting the future. The strategic plans produced by this type of planning contain at a minimum the direction prescribed by its top management and the action plans detailing the changes to be made to move the organization in its chosen direction.

d Agency IRM Plan. A 5-year strategic IRM plan for the agency as a whole, describing the agency mission and purpose and recent IRM background, its current situation and future outlook, its future IRM technology needs, the organizational direction as defined in the agency IRM planning framework, and a definitive plan of action in the form of IRM objectives to bring out changes and improvements to its overall effectiveness in IRM. The first year of the plan is the year immediately following the year of the current planning cycle. To illustrate, in the FY 89 planning cycle IRM plans for FY 1990-94 will be developed.

e USDA Long-Range IRM Plan. A biennial, Departmental-level strategic IRM plan, prepared by OIRM at the end of each regular planning cycle and based on the current set of approved agency IRM plans. This USDA plan covers the same 5-year period as the agency IRM plans on which it is based. The USDA IRM plan provides a global perspective of IRM Departmentwide; its regular supplement, the Agency IRM Plan Profiles, presents an abstract of each agency IRM plan.

f OIRM Strategic Management Plan (for Long-Range IRM Planning). This document prepared by OIRM at the beginning of each regular planning cycle contains the operative IRM planning

guidance to be followed by agency IRM managers and strategic planners when planning and preparing their IRM plans. This management guidance also contains the Departmental planning framework (assumptions, policies, goals, and supporting strategies) that establishes IRM direction of the concepts and definitions used in the USDA IRM planning process, along with suggested methods of agency planning and details of the required format and content of agency plans.

g Regular Planning Cycle and Abbreviated Planning Cycle. These two types of planning cycles alternate every other year. The regular cycle requires that a full six-section plan as defined by Departmental guidance be prepared by the USDA agencies. The following cycle will be an abbreviated cycle in which only the last two sections (Section 5 and 6) need be submitted. The preceding regular agency plan must have been approved by the Department to qualify the agency for this option.

5 PURPOSE FOR AGENCY LONG-RANGE STRATEGIC IRM PLANS

The agency IRM plans will convey at a minimum agency wide information about the agency's IRM direction and planned course of action, as specified in the Departmental guidance. This information will be useful to several organizational entities for various purposes, e.g.:

- a To guide each agency and its internal organizations in their IRM efforts; this is the principal function of agency IRM plans;
- b To encourage exchange of information among USDA agencies concerned with similar IRM issues;
- c To enable the Department to coordinate its IRM activities; and
- d To provide information for the USDA Long-Range IRM Plan that will give a Departmental perspective and overview of the set of agency long-range IRM plans.

While agency plans are subject to approval by the Department, they belong to the originating agency; these plans are not "reports" to the Department, they are the agency blueprints for their future IRM. Any actions in response to requests for copies of the agency plans are at the discretion of the owning agency; as a matter of policy, the Department (OIRM) does not distribute them.

6 PURPOSES FOR THE USDA LONG-RANGE IRM PLANS

USDA long-range IRM plans will convey information about the Department's IRM direction and planned course of action as determined in large part by agency plans. This information will be useful to several organizational entities both internal and external to the Department, e.g.:

- a To inform concerned USDA managers of IRM efforts and major Departmentwide trends;

b To provide central oversight Agencies at the Federal level (e.g., OMB, GSA, GAO) and the Congress with a comprehensive view of USDA's thrust and direction in IRM.

c To make information available to interested vendors seeking an understanding of USDA's technology needs.

OIRM is responsible for the distribution of the USDA IRM plan and its supplements.

7 RESPONSIBILITIES

a The Planning, Review, and Standards Division of OIRM will:

(1) Manage, coordinate, and administer the Departmental long-range IRM planning process;

(2) Prepare the Departmental planning guidance and any other information necessary to provide agencies with a firm basis for IRM planning;

(3) Develop the schedule of events for IRM planning, distribute planning guidance as needed, and issue the call for submission of agency IRM plans;

(4) Specify the Department's requirements for the format and content of agency IRM plans.

(5) Manage the Departmental approval process, verify conformance with Departmental specifications, distribute plans to key OIRM managers for substantive evaluation, and based on their findings recommend appropriate approval actions.

(6) Accept and evaluate at any time agency suggestions for improving any part of the USDA IRM planning process.

b Agencies will:

(1) Assess their own situations with respect to IRM, establish a planning process for the agency, set appropriate agency IRM parameters and define a set of IRM objectives;

(2) Prepare strategic IRM plans each year according to OIRM's planning

guidance and submit them to OIRM within the schedule set by OIRM; and

(3) Implement and meet the objectives set in their strategic IRM plans in a timely fashion.

Each agency senior IRM official is responsible for managing the agency's internal planning process and for assuring that the agency plans fully meet the Department's requirements.

8 APPROVAL PROCESS

a Agency Approvals. Agency IRM plans are to be approved by the Agency Head prior to submission to the Department (OIRM).

b Departmental Approval. Agency plans submitted to OIRM will first be evaluated for conformance with the current USDA planning guidance specifying format and content requirements for agency plans. At the request of OIRM, plans not meeting minimum requirements will be adjusted by the agency before further evaluation for Departmental approval can be undertaken.

Plans meeting minimum requirements will be further evaluated for technical feasibility and consistency with Departmental IRM policy and direction. Agency senior IRM officials may need to work with the Director, OIRM, in eliminating any problem areas.

The USDA Senior Official for IRM has delegated to the Director of OIRM the responsibility for Departmental approval for agency IRM plans. The Department's decision may take one of the following forms:

(1) Approval: The plan as submitted is approved in its entirety;

(2) Approval with modifications: The agency has agreed to modify certain parts of the plan in conformance with OIRM recommendations. The plan is approved subject to these modifications which may be required in the current plan or may be deferred to the next plan;

(3) Approval with exclusions: Pending agreement as to the necessary modifications to certain parts of the plan in question or the deletion of those parts from the agency plans, those parts of the plan unaffected are approved; or

(4) Disapproval: The entire plan is disapproved, pending resolution of differences.

9 EXEMPTIONS

If an agency believes its own IRM program is so relatively insignificant that strategic IRM planning is unnecessary, it may apply to the Director of OIRM for a permanent exemption. If granted, the exemption may be rescinded by the Director of OIRM in the future in the event the agency IRM situation changes.

Agencies may request of the Director of OIRM a temporary exemption for a single planning cycle in the event of some special organizational situation precluding IRM planning temporarily. Agency IRM planning will resume in the next cycle with a regular six-section plan.