



Recommendation 85-2

Agency Procedures for Performing Regulatory Analysis of Rules

(Adopted June 13, 1985)

Since 1974 executive branch agencies have been subject to a series of Presidential executive orders that required agencies to prepare comprehensive impact analyses for major rulemaking proposals. Various terms "inflation impact statements," "regulatory analyses," and "regulatory impact analyses," these analyses were all designed to identify or measure the costs and benefits of rulemaking options being considered by Federal administrative agencies. Congress also has imposed impact analysis requirements on administrative agencies through the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Regulatory Flexibility Act of 1980, and by amendments to authorizing statutes for particular agencies.

The regulatory analysis function has become increasingly formalized within agencies as a result of the proliferation and durability of these requirements. This recommendation is based on a Conference study of the ways agencies have incorporated the regulatory analysis function into their decisionmaking process. A general conclusion from this study is that regulatory analysis can be a useful device in rulemaking if it is taken seriously by upper level agency decisionmakers; the regulatory analysis function is effectively integrated into the rulemaking process, and the limitations of regulatory analysis are recognized by those who rely upon it.

The recommendation contains specific advice on the use and limits of regulatory analysis and on integration of regulatory analysis into the agency rulemaking process. Unless expressly so stated, the recommendation is not intended to address application of the Freedom of Information Act to agency records used in regulatory analysis. In particular, it is not intended to expand or decrease, the statutory protections afforded trade secrets and commercial or financial information obtained for use in regulatory analysis.



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Recommendation

1. *The Use of Regulatory Analysis to Identify Options*

Regulatory analysis¹ can be most useful to agency decisionmakers in identifying regulatory options if the regulatory analysis function is an integral part of the agency decisionmaking process. To make regulatory analysis a more effective device for identifying options, agencies should adopt the following practices:

- a. When an agency begins intensive information-gathering and other analytical efforts on a rule, the agency's technical staff and regulatory analysts should attempt, at an early stage, to identify a broad range of regulatory options.
- b. Agencies should experiment with a phased system of reducing options. Under a phased system, the agency initially should identify as large a number of options as it can for brief study. As options are considered and rejected, the remaining options should be analyzed with increasing thoroughness. As resource constraints preclude further consideration of an option, the agency should list the option in its regulatory analysis document and explain briefly why the option did not warrant further study.

¹ The following definitions are used in this recommendation:

"Regulatory analysis" is a comprehensive analysis of the economic, social, and environmental impacts of one or more alternatives for addressing a problem undertaken in connection with an agency rulemaking effort. A regulatory analysis may include or be separate from an environmental impact assessment of a rule prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

A "regulatory analysis document" is a written regulatory analysis, whether drafted to comply with Executive Order 12,291, the Regulatory Flexibility Act, or other statutes and executive orders. Regulatory analysis documents also may include similar documents which, though not required by statute or executive order, are prepared to comply with agency regulations or directives stating that the agency intends to treat the documents as regulatory analyses. The term "regulatory analysis document" is intended to include only final analyses prepared in connection with a proposed or a final rule.

A "regulatory analyst" is an agency employee who prepares the whole or part of a regulatory analysis. Regulatory analysts often are economists or policy analysts by training, and they often are assigned to a separate institutional unit within an agency.

The "technical staff" is composed of agency employees within a program office who conduct investigations, prepare technical support documents, and often draft preambles and recommended language for proposed and final agency rules. When a member of the technical staff is assigned to perform a regulatory analysis, he or she then is both a regulatory analyst and a member of the technical staff.



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c. Although the extent to which options are identified and analyzed in regulatory analysis documents is largely a matter for individual agency management, regulatory analysis documents normally should attempt to identify and analyze several realistic regulatory options.

2. Integrating Regulatory Analysis Into the Decisionmaking Process

a. *Timing of Analytical Input.* If regulatory analysis is to be used in a rulemaking, the agency decisionmaking process should be structured to involve agency regulatory analysts early in the evolution of the rule, before alternatives have been eliminated. Regulatory analysis should not be used to produce post hoc rationalizations for decisions already made, nor should it be allowed to unduly delay rulemaking proceedings.

b. *Communicating Policy to Regulatory Analysts.* Regulatory analysis can be a valuable tool for communicating policy within regulatory agencies because a primary function of regulatory analysis is to measure regulatory options against agency policy goals. Upper level policymakers in agencies should provide clear guidance to subordinate decisionmaking units (such as steering committees and working groups) on the policies that should guide the agency in choosing among options in individual rulemaking proceedings.

c. *High Level Involvement at Important Decisionmaking Junctures.* Because of the different perspectives of an agency's regulatory analysts and its technical staff, disagreements over appropriate agency policy will often result when both staffs are relied upon in the decisionmaking process. The agency should adopt procedures that will encourage resolution of such disagreements at important decisionmaking junctures at a high policy level.

d. *Regulatory Analysts' Role in Responding to Comments.* When an agency solicits public comment on a regulatory analysis document or on provisions of a proposed rule that are supported by the regulatory analysis document, the agency should structure its decisionmaking process to ensure that the agency's regulatory analysts participate in developing the agency's response to the public comments.

e. *Intragovernmental Comments.* Agencies should place in the public file of the rulemaking proceeding any material factual information (as distinct from indications of governmental policy) from other agencies that is directed to the contents of regulatory analysis documents. See ACUS Recommendation 80-6 (1 CFR 305.80-6).

f. *Public Availability of Regulatory Analysis Documents.* Agencies should make regulatory analysis documents available to the public when they publish proposed and final rules in the



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Federal Register, even if the Freedom of Information Act's exemption for intra-agency memoranda, 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(5), might apply to portions of the documents. As appropriate, agencies also should prepare brief summaries of regulatory analysis documents and make them available to the public and appropriate congressional committees. The summaries should contain tables, charts, and other devices, as needed, to make the information contained in the regulatory analysis documents understandable.

3. Use of Regulatory Analysis Where Not Required or Where Options Are Foreclosed

a. Regulatory analysis documents should identify the costs and benefits of reasonable options, even if the agency may lack the statutory authority to implement some of the options. If the agency determines that the best options cannot be implemented under its statutory authority, the agency should so inform the institutions with power to implement them, such as Congress and other agencies.

b. Agencies should consider using regulatory analysis when undertaking significant rulemaking" proceedings with projected impacts falling below the established thresholds for requiring formal regulatory analyses.

4. Information in Regulatory Analysis Documents

This part of the recommendation addresses the information that should be included in regulatory analysis documents for use by the public and agency decisionmakers.²

a. When agencies use quantitative models to quantify important variables in regulatory analysis documents, the known limitations of those models should be clearly stated.

b. To prevent quantitative models from oversimplifying complex decisionmaking factors, agencies should require regulatory analysis documents to (1) state clearly the major assumptions that undergird the models relied upon in the regulatory analysis, and (2) describe important decisionmaking variables that are not subject to quantitative analysis.

² The Conference has previously recommended that agencies using cost-benefit and similar analyses include in notices of particular proceedings certain information about the analytical methods and assumptions used in conducting the analyses. See ACUS Recommendation 79-4 (1 CFR 305.79-4).



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c. Agencies should require that regulatory analysis documents attempt to characterize the uncertainties that are included in quantitative predictions by using tools such as confidence intervals, multiple assessment models, sensitivity analysis, and worst case analysis.

d. Agencies should require that regulatory analysis documents address explicitly the distributional impacts of rulemaking options and the methods used for discounting future costs and benefits. Agencies should consider using more than one discount rate to clarify the sensitivity of the analytical projections to the discount rate.

e. Agency regulatory analysis documents should make explicit reference to any agency policies that motivate the agency to choose one set of assumptions over another, draw one inference rather than another, or choose one quantitative model over another.

5. Informational Needs for Regulatory Analysis

a. *Agency Access to Information.* Adequate information on the costs and economic impacts of proposed rules is essential to the regulatory process, and often the most important source of this information is a regulated party. Therefore, in exercising its authority under the Paperwork Reduction Act, the Office of Management and Budget should allow agencies to address reasonable requests for cost and economic impact information to regulated parties when the information is needed for regulatory analysis. The Office of Management and Budget should continue to coordinate its regulatory analysis review function with its paperwork reduction function to ensure that it approves information-gathering activities that are designed to yield information that it is likely to require later in the rulemaking review process.

b. *Coordination of Information Gathering Activities.* Agencies should coordinate their sponsored research activities with their regulatory analysis initiatives. More specifically, agencies should include regulatory analysts in their process for setting long-term research priorities. In addition, agencies should encourage the participation of representatives from the office responsible for agency-sponsored research in the rulemaking process at the very early stages when informational needs are defined.

c. *Cooperative Regulatory Analysis.* Agencies should consider whether the techniques suggested for negotiation of proposed regulations in ACUS Recommendation 82-4 (1 CFR 305.82-4) might be useful in undertaking, in specific proceedings, "cooperative regulatory analysis." This would consist of bringing representatives of all affected parties together,



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consistent with the Federal Advisory Committee Act where applicable, to assess the validity of particular studies prior to relying upon those studies in regulatory analysis documents.

d. *Reducing Potential Bias.* Agencies should attempt to reduce the impact of bias in the sources of the information that they use in preparing regulatory analysis documents. Though agencies should consider the source of information in giving it weight, this does not mean that they should automatically attach less value to information simply because it comes from a source with an interest in the outcome of the rulemaking. Agencies should reduce the impact of bias by:

(i) Consulting, whenever possible, multiple sources of information in preparing regulatory analysis documents;

(ii) Carefully citing in regulatory analysis documents all information upon which the analysis draws, and making the information available for public scrutiny at convenient times and places;

(iii) Actively soliciting comment and criticism from acknowledged experts in the fields that the documents address.

e. *Retrospective Assessments of Previous Analyses.* Agencies should regularly perform retrospective assessments of the predictions made previously in regulatory analysis documents. Retrospective analysis can provide information on the accuracy of past agency predictions and thereby enable an agency to increase the accuracy of future predictions or make judgments about the value of regulatory analysis to its regulatory effort.

6. *Use of Consultants in Preparing Regulatory Analysis Documents*

Agencies can benefit from entering into consulting contracts with qualified experts to aid in gathering and analyzing information for regulatory analysis documents. However, agency personnel should retain the ultimate responsibility for the contents of regulatory analysis documents and guard against consultant conflict of interest. To these ends, agencies should ensure that: (1) Agency employees, not consultants, draft regulatory analysis documents, and (2) when a regulatory analysis document relies upon consultant reports, the reports are placed in the public file of the rulemaking proceeding, even if the Freedom of Information Act's exemption for intra-agency memoranda, 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(5) might apply to portions of the reports.



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7. *The Scope and Limits of Regulatory Analysis*

a. Cost-benefit analysis is an effective tool for marshalling and analyzing information and for establishing regulatory priorities.

b. Other analytical techniques, such as cost-effectiveness analysis and multi-objective analysis, are also useful for rulemaking that involves health, environmental, historical, artistic, and aesthetic considerations for which markets do not exist.

c. Agency rulemaking decisions must take into account the limits of the agency's statutory authority and its overall policy goals, as well as the limits of the methods and data used in the regulatory analysis.

d. The same criteria should be used in granting exemptions from regulatory analysis requirements, irrespective of whether the proceeding has been commenced to formulate new rules or to amend or repeal existing rules.

Citations:

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