

Section V

**OTA ORGANIZATION AND
OPERATIONS**

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Created by the Technology Assessment Act of 1972 (86 Stat. 797) to help Congress anticipate and plan for the consequences of uses of technology, OTA received funding in November 1973, and commenced operations with the convening of the second session of the 93d Congress in January 1974.

The statute specifies that OTA shall consist of a bipartisan Congressional Board, Director, Deputy Director, and such other employees and consultants as may be necessary in the conduct of the Office's work. In addition, the Board is assisted by a Technology Assessment Advisory Council comprised of 10 public members eminent in scientific, technological, or educational fields, the Comptroller General of the United States, and the Director of the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress.

The Congressional Board sets the policies of the Office and is the sole and exclusive oversight body governing OTA. The OTA Director is the chief executive officer and is responsible solely to the Board, of which he is a nonvoting member. The Council advises the Congressional Board, as maybe requested, on technology assessment matters.

Six Senators and six Representatives, evenly divided by party, serve on the OTA Congressional Board. They are appointed respectively by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. In 1976, Congressman Olin E. Teague, D.-Texas, and Senator Clifford P. Case, R.-New Jersey, served as the Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively of the Board. The two posts rotate between the Senate and the House in alternate Congresses. The Board members from each House select their own Chairman or Vice Chairman, as the case may be.

In providing assistance to the Congress, OTA is to: identify existing or probable impacts of technology or technological programs; where possible, ascertain cause-and-effect relationships; identify alternative tech-

nological methods of implementing specific programs; identify alternative programs for achieving requisite goals; make estimates and comparisons of the impacts of alternative methods and programs; present findings of completed analyses to the appropriate legislative authorities; identify areas where additional research or data collection is required to provide support for assessments; and undertake such additional associated activities as may be directed.

Initiation, Processing, and flow of Assessments

The Office of Technology Assessment, by statute, is located within and is responsible to the legislative branch of Government. Accordingly, its basic mission is to provide congressional committees-with assessments or studies which identify the range of probable consequences, social as well as physical, of policy alternatives affecting the uses of technology. Requests for OTA assessments may be initiated by:

- (1) The chairman of any standing, special, select, or joint committee of the Congress, acting for himself, at the request of the ranking minority member, or a majority of the committee members;
- (2) the OTA Board; or
- (3) the OTA Director, in consultation with the Board.

The authorization of specific assessment projects and the allocation of funds for their performance is the responsibility of the OTA Board. The Board has established priority areas of study, and has approved individual assessment projects within those areas. In arriving at these decisions, the Board considers recommendations and plans developed by OTA staff, and applies the following general

selection criteria, developed in consultation with the Advisory Council:

- Is this now or likely to become a major national issue ?
- Can OTA make a unique contribution, or could the requested activity be done effectively by the requesting committee or another agency of Congress?
- How significant are the costs and benefits to society of the various policy options involved, and how will they be distributed among various impacted groups?
- Is the technological impact irreversible?
- How imminent is the impact?
- Is there sufficient available knowledge to assess the technology and its consequences?
- Is the assessment of manageable scope-- can it be bounded within reasonable limits ?
- What will be the cost of the assessment?
- How much time will be required to do the assessment ?
- What is the likelihood of congressional action in response to the assessment?
- Would this assessment complement or detract from other OTA projects?

Assessments are developed and conducted by OTA program managers and staff who have expertise in the subject under study. They are assisted, as appropriate, by citizen advisory panels of experts, consultants, contractors, and other congressional information agencies. The approach to a given assessment project may involve exploratory meetings or workshops of advisory panels, staff analyses, and consultant studies. (A more detailed discussion of this process is contained in section **iv.**)

Completed assessments and studies are transmitted by the OTA Board to the committee which requested the project, as well as to other interested committees, and are printed for public dissemination. The committees of Congress have first access to OTA assessment results and findings. At the direction of the Board, printing and public dissemination of final OTA reports takes place at the earliest possible date in accordance with arrangements worked out with the requesting committee(s).

Staffing and Organizational Structure

The OTA professional staff has been recruited from the academic community, business and industry, and from other Government agencies. With the exception of those officers with overall administrative responsibilities, professional staff members are assigned to specific program areas according to their experience and training. Staff professionals are drawn from a wide variety of disciplines and backgrounds, including the physical sciences and engineering, social sciences, law, and general administration. Skilled professionals from executive branch agencies, detailed to OTA on a temporary basis, have made major contributions, as have participants in several congressional fellowship programs. A chart detailing OTA's organizational structure accompanies this section.

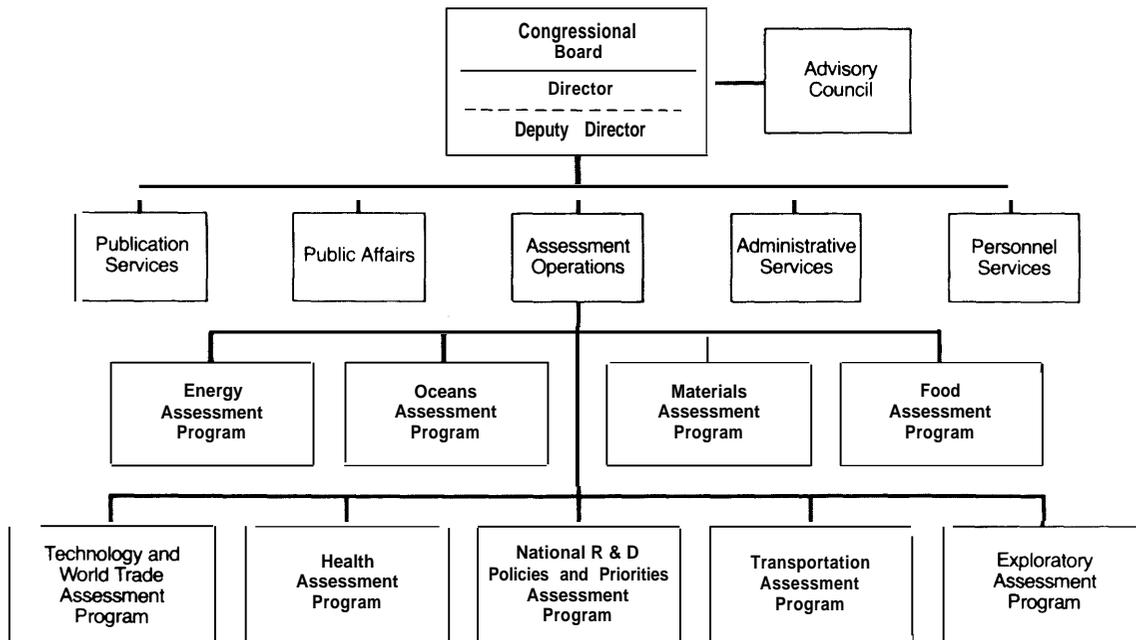
Financial and Administrative Activities

Administrative and financial aspects of OTA operations are overseen by an administrative officer who reports to the Director. These include procurement and contracting, budget and financial accounting and control, payroll, travel, office space, security, accounts payable and receivable, and other miscellaneous administrative support services.

A personnel officer is responsible for all staff support functions for OTA. These include recruitment, selection, orientation and processing, classification and salary determination, and performance evaluation. The publications officer is responsible for production, editing, layout and design, graphics, printing, and sale of OTA publications and other printed material.

In response to the growth in demand for OTA assessments, the Congressional Board approved submission to the Congress in 1976 of a budget request totaling \$8.5 million for fiscal year 1977. Congress appropriated \$6.6 million to OTA for fiscal year 1977. OTA operated with a carryover funding of about \$2.9 million from fiscal year 1976. In addition, a request was made for a fiscal year 1977 supplement of \$729,000 to cover two congressionally mandated assessments.

Office **of** Technology Assessment
Organizational Structure



(In Thousands of Dollars)

	Fiscal Year 1974 actual	Fiscal Year 1975 actual	Fiscal Year 1976 actual*	Fiscal Year 1976 Transition Quarter	Fiscal Year 1977 estimate	Fiscal Year 1978 request
Budgetary History						
By program:						
Energy	322	432.9	668.3	406	1,836	1,163
Food	16.1	267.7	267.3	16.5	644	678
Health	161.7	69.4	269.5	22.3	478	651
Materials4	1,257.4	485.8	11.7	,354	1,201
Oceans	11.6	709.5	360.2	32.2	944	809
Transportation	471.6	402.4	394.5	93.5	,080	724
R&D	—	—	61.6	70.9	,242	1,199
Technology & World						
Trade	—	55.6	52.1	18	426	347
Exploratory7	177.2	285	140.7	429	357
General &						
Administrative	329.7	650	992.7	121.2	1,282	1,368
TOTAL - OTA	1,345	4,022	3,837	1,333	9,717	8,500
(Includes funds available from prior year's appropriations.)						

*Including transitional quarter

Reflecting the recommendations of the Congressional Appropriations Committees, as stated in the fiscal year 1977 conference report, OTA reprogramed the activities of the Office on the basis of available funds and the priorities set by the Board. A number of requests for assessments were combined with others or rescheduled in all program areas.

Information Services

OTA technology assessment activities are supported by an Information Services staff, which maintains an in-house library containing basic background materials and current data resources. In addition, this staff maintains liaison with the Library of Congress to facilitate OTA use of its extensive facilities and services.

The Information Services staff also provides online access to several computerized data-retrieval networks including: SCORPIO, a Library of Congress system which provides information on current policy-oriented literature and the status of bills introduced in Congress; TRIS (Transportation Research Information Service), a file operated by Battelle Memorial Institute which yields document citations on transportation-related materials; ATS (Administrative Terminal Service), an IBM program available on the Library of Congress Computer which is used for text editing and report generation; and INFONET, a commercial network through which OTA can generate and operate its own computational and analytical programs.

Public Participation

Public participation is an important part of OTA's technology assessment process. In addition to the wide use of citizen advisory groups and consultants, the Office disseminates information to the various parties at interest in the subject being assessed so they may become more effectively involved in the public decisionmaking process. In keeping with this objective, meetings of OTA's Congressional Board and Advisory Council are open to the public. Also, the OTA Director is advised by an officer for public participation as well as a public affairs officer,

The Office of Public Participation, reporting directly to the Director, coordinates an overall program of activities to facilitate citizen involvement in the technology assessment process, including the establishment of improved communications with business, industry, citizen/consumer, labor, public interest, and professional and impacted groups, the creation of outreach mechanisms, and the instituting of public education programs.

Exploratory Assessment Program

OTA screening procedures for evaluating assessment requests include smaller scale, exploratory projects undertaken to provide a better basis for decisions by the OTA Board as to whether certain major study projects are warranted. The Exploratory Assessment Program involves senior staff personnel and consultants in a systematic mechanism for defining and evaluating specific assessment proposals submitted to OTA which do not fall into other program areas. The technology and world trade assessment originated, for instance, in the Exploratory Program in 1975, and became a separate program area in 1976.

Another planning project begun in 1975 identified some issues and trends involving science and technology for the U.S. educational system. As a result, OTA was asked to assist the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education of the House Committee on Education and Labor in implementing the foresight provisions with regard to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The preliminary planning effort examined long-range trends and shifts in American society which may influence issues in elementary and secondary education. By year's end, a preliminary working paper was sent to the subcommittee for their review and evaluation of the committee's study needs.

Other Activities

Along with the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the Congressional Research Service (CRS), and the General Accounting Office (GAO), OTA participates in an inter-agency research notification system designed

to facilitate the coordination of activities and exchange of information among the four organizations and avoid duplication of effort. Representatives of the four agencies meet reg-

ularly and each of the offices submits biweekly status reports on program activity for publication in a central directory of congressional research activity.