

Improving the Transition of Research and Innovation to NWS Operations

“We need help! It is far too difficult to get innovations developed in the field transferred to NWS enterprise operations,” said Science Service Division (SSD) Chiefs to Don Berchoff, Director of the Office of Science and Technology during an October 2008 Technology Week.

In response, Berchoff established the [Research and Innovation Transition Team](#) (RITT) within the Meteorological Development Laboratory in March 2009. The RITT’s mission is to facilitate the transition of innovation and research projects into NWS operations.

Its key duties are to maintain awareness of innovations with enterprise potential, identify promising projects for seed funding, connect field innovators with research labs to leverage and synchronize efforts, and assist integrated work teams to navigate the Operations Service Improvement Process (OSIP). Its bottom line is to ensure that transition projects succeed.

Andy Edman, Chief of the Western Region Science Service Division, said, “The NWS must become more nimble to support the emerging vision of improving Decision Support. New ideas and technologies need to be adopted much more quickly than our current processes support.”

Being on top of technology includes knowing what is needed by the constantly mobile customer.

Edman added, “One of our first projects, Mobile Decision Support Services (iNWS), was designed to provide a mobile alerting service to bring critical weather data and automatic alerts directly to cell phones and mobile devices.”

The NWS Corporate Board approved iNWS in August 2009. The RITT adopted the iNWS as one of the first two NWS projects to speed the prototype to operational implementation. The RITT is using a team of Headquarters and regional staff to implement the iNWS system.

The RITT is the first group established in NOAA whose sole focus is improving transition of research to operations. Concurrent to the formation of the RITT, the Innovation Advisory Board (IAB) was established by the SSD Chiefs. The IAB reviews and prioritizes regional innovation projects and recommends them for transition to NWS Enterprise Operations.

The RITT holds a virtual forum each month where candidate research and innovation projects are presented and discussed. The establishment of the RITT Forum represents the first time that NOAA scientists and NWS field representatives have had a standing venue in which to share information on transition issues and to explore collaboration.

Berchoff is pleased with the progress so far. He said, “The RITT/IAB capability is a manifestation of a concerted effort by OST to accelerate the infusion of science and technology from NOAA labs and NWS field innovators into operations. The RITT’s early successes include facilitating the movement of projects through the pipeline in record time.”

Berchoff continues with, “Watching the positive transformation in the relationship between the field, the IAB, and the RITT has been extremely satisfying. The synergy and teamwork will continue to result in better capabilities for the field, and faster, at a lower cost to the enterprise.”

Transitions will always be challenging, but in its first year of operation, the RITT is already well on its way to developing the needed expertise to assist NWS in becoming smarter and more efficient at tackling them.