Office of Science and Technology Policy Position Descriptions

Introduction

* The Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) was formally created by PL 94-282 as an entity within the Executive Office of the President.
* Positions:
  + Director (Senate confirmed)
  + Four associate directors (Senate confirmed)
    - The focus and titles of these associate directors are not specified; it is up to each administration’s officials to organize as they’d prefer.
      * Obama: Science; Technology; National Security & International Affairs; Environment & Energy (This has varied somewhat throughout the Obama administration.)
        + When positions were vacant, they were covered by a Schedule C—a person who does not require Senate confirmation—as deputy and acting lead.
      * Bush: Science; Technology
        + Homeland & National Security was a matrixed semi-organization within OSTP that worked with staff from both the Science and Technology divisions.
      * Clinton: Science; Technology; Environment; National Security & International Affairs
  + Political staff, career staff, detailees[[1]](#footnote-1)/fellows/IPAs[[2]](#footnote-2) (While on different timelines and means, these mostly perform similar functions within the office)
  + Support staff (for example, administrative, communications, legal, IT)
* The total staff number within OSTP has varied widely. Obama’s OSTP has well over 100 staff members; OSTP under Bush had about 50; Clinton’s had about 60.
* Stature:
  + OSTP leaders are not a part of the president’s Cabinet by statute. Some have been given dual titles of their statutory position plus “assistant to the president.” The latter gives them Cabinet rank.
  + The “chief technology officer” in Obama’s OSTP is also a made-up title.
    - Obama’s first CTO was also the associate director for technology (Senate confirmed). The next two CTO’s held the titles of CTO & assistant to the president, and were not nominated for a Senate-confirmed OSTP associate director position.
      * For these latter two, OSTP reorganized with an “Office of the Chief Technology Officer” and a “Technology & Innovation Division” whose associate director position was vacant, with a Schedule C employee as deputy who actually ran it. (There was never an intent to change this setup.)

POSITION DESCRIPTION

# Associate Directors of the Office of Science and technology policy, executive office of the president

Note: As the exact focus for each is up to the incoming administration, a generic version follows:

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| **OVERVIEW** | |
| Senate Committee | Commerce, Science and Transportation |
| Agency Mission | The mission of the Office of Science and Technology Policy is threefold: first, to provide the president and his senior staff with accurate, relevant and timely scientific and technical advice on all matters of consequence; second, to ensure that the policies of the executive branch are informed by sound science; and third, to ensure that the scientific and technical work of the executive branch is properly coordinated so as to provide the greatest benefit to society.[[3]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Overview | OSTP associate directors lead a division of individuals that are a mix of political and nonpolitical appointees, career employees and detailees/IPAs/fellows. The division works to meet all aspects of OSTP’s mission for its assigned subset of the government’s science and technology matters. Associate directors also participate in deputy-level meetings of other Executive Office of the President (EOP)-led interagency bodies (such as the National Security Council or the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States); negotiate with peers at the Office of Management and Budget on priorities within the federal budget; and serve as the administration’s primary advocate for a number of science and technology issues. |
| Compensation | Level III $165,300 (5 U.S.C. § 5314)[[4]](#endnote-2) |
| Position Reports to | Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** | |
| Management Scope | OSTP has historically varied quite significantly in size based on the goals of the Administration. During the Obama administration, it has grown to approximately 120 full time employees including employees of the Executive Office of the President, detailees, fellows and others. Historically there have been 4 Senate-confirmed Associate Directors reporting to the Director: for science, technology, national security and international affairs and energy and the environment. The role of Chief Technology Officer was added during the Obama administration. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Identifies and prioritizes topics for the division (and thus, the executive branch) to focus on, and leads the division as it leads interagency efforts on those topics * Identifies individuals who can lead activities within the division, and determines how to get them detailed to work at OSTP while being paid by others * Represents the administration and the global science community in policymaking activities of other EOP agencies * Serves as the administration’s figurehead on the priority topics in discussion with the science community, other government entities and the public. |
| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** | |
| Requirements | * Recognized educational background and experience within at least one priority topic area for the division * Understanding of the federal science and technology ecosystem, budget development and implementation, and EOP processes * Established relationships within the federal government and private-sector science communities * Experience leading disparate groups to consensus |
| Competencies | * Ability to convene groups with divergent agendas and lead them to consensus, without having the power to mandate * Ability to deeply understand both technical issues and strategic opportunities and constraints, and to chart an optimal path forward * Skill as a collaborative individual able to build relationships with, and influence others * Strong communication skills for succeeding in a variety of contexts: deep technical discussions, policy/budget deliberations and advocating and justifying priorities * Facility for working comfortably in a high-stress, high-visibility position, in which success is dependent on the work of others, most of them outside direct control, but responsibility for failure rests with the associate director |

# Endnotes

This position description was created with the help of MITRE Corporation, a not-for-profit company that provides innovative, practical solutions for some of the nation's most critical challenges in defense and intelligence, aviation, civil systems, homeland security, the judiciary, healthcare and cybersecurity.

1. An employee of a United States government agency on assignment or loan. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program provides for the temporary assignment of personnel between the Federal Government and state and local governments, colleges and universities, Indian tribal governments, federally funded research and development centers, and other eligible organizations. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/ostp/about [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
4. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)