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This product is part of the RAND Corporation corporate publication series. Corporate publications describe or promote RAND divisions and programs, summarize research results, or announce upcoming events.
For the past 15 years, Jim Thomson and I have reviewed the previous year’s accomplishments in terms of whether RAND’s research and analysis are addressing issues at or near the top of the national and international policy agenda, reaching key decisionmakers and the broader public, and contributing to concrete improvements in policy and practice. These objectives constitute our three-tiered test for mission success.

As the new RAND president, one of my most important goals is for our work to have even greater policy impact. I appreciate that making an impact can take many different forms and will always be very challenging, given the complexity of decisionmaking processes both inside and outside governments. But the purpose of the research and analysis we do at RAND is to help decisionmakers and the public improve policies, programs, and processes so that nations, communities, organizations, and individuals are better off—healthier, safer, more secure, more prosperous. That is the ultimate objective of the work of the nearly 2,000 people at RAND.

Accomplishments like the ones I summarize briefly in this message, as well as the many others I could have included, result from the collective efforts of the entire RAND organization. It is a record of achievement that each of us can be proud of, and it is the reason why I am proud to be RAND’s president.

Michael D. Rich
Sometimes our work is commissioned by organizations with responsibility for making the decision or managing the process that is the focus of the work. In those situations, we can carry out our mission in a direct way. There were many examples of such success in 2011. Here are just a few:

- In a project for the City of New York, our analysis found that school-wide performance bonuses for teachers did not improve student achievement at any grade level. According to the *New York Times*, the results led the New York Department of Education to cancel the program.

- Numerous projects helped clients in the U.S. Departments of Defense and Homeland Security make more effective decisions about important equipment modernization choices and helped save money: The U.S. Air Force decided to reduce its C-130 fleet by 40 aircraft, resulting in annual operating cost savings of $280 million; the U.S. Coast Guard selected the equipment attributes and performance parameters for its new, multibillion-dollar Offshore Patrol Cutter program; the U.S. Army adopted more efficient and effective approaches to managing organizational clothing and individual equipment (OCIE) at the Army’s Central Issue Facilities, changes that resulted in savings of $100 million in the first year and annual savings of $30 million thereafter. And extensive RAND research on the future size, character, and composition of U.S. air forces for detecting, tracking, engaging, and destroying targets in adversary countries led to the Secretary of Defense’s decision to develop a new long-range bomber.

- Health care costs are consuming a steadily growing percentage of the United States’ gross domestic product. For this reason, policymakers and business leaders urgently need research that can help them identify and implement effective strategies to rein in rising health care costs. One promising initiative is the Quality Bonus Program for Medicare Advantage plans, which bases hospital reimbursements in part on the quality of care delivered and the patients’ satisfaction during their stays. RAND analysis for the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) led the CMS administrator to change the weights used to calculate those payments.

Very often, however, the process of helping shape policy requires that we reach multiple audiences. This is required when our clients share responsibility with others or commission research on behalf of other decisionmakers, as when private foundations commission research on public policy issues or when national governments commission research on policies that are made by others. In those cases, it is not enough to communicate our findings and recommendations to only our clients. Instead, we must broadly disseminate our work.

For example, ensuring that RAND research makes a policy impact frequently requires that RAND research teams interact effectively with legislatures. As in previous years, 2011 offered many examples of this: RAND research teams briefed lawmakers on such varied issues as thresholds for reporting bodily-injury settlements to Medicare, military enlistment and reenlistment bonuses, consumer choice in auto-insurance coverage levels, and measurement of school performance, among others.

More and more, RAND is able to shape policy decisions by actively disseminating analytical methods and training tools that we have developed. For example, the findings of RAND’s comprehensive examination of health care quality in the United States (published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 2003) have become the empirical core of quality improvement initiatives in the United States and elsewhere. In a similar vein, in 2011 the U.S. National Quality Forum adopted the RAND Cancer Quality ASSiST Method, the first quality indicators for supportive, palliative, and end-of-life care.
There were many other notable examples last year:

- The “cost of crime” calculator, which is being used by cities and media to estimate the value of police services and evaluate the performance of police forces.
- An analytical tool developed by RAND Europe for universities to support their submissions to the new UK Research Excellence Framework, the national system for allocating university research funding based on impact.
- The online Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) training course and implementation support website.
- A sophisticated planning tool and risk reduction model for evaluating coastal restoration and protection proposals in Louisiana.

For many of the most complex issues we address, making an impact requires a sustained effort, usually involving a stream of successive and interrelated projects, dissemination through multiple channels, and direct assistance with policy implementation. A few examples:

- RAND research (Invisible Wounds of War in 2008) was the first to address the prevalence of psychological and cognitive injuries among men and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, and this research continued to be cited widely in 2011, including in connection with the White House’s “Joining Forces” initiative. The Invisible Wounds of War project has spawned many subsequent analyses at RAND and elsewhere that have assisted the U.S. military with its efforts to promote resilience as part of total force fitness and introduce state-of-the-art suicide-prevention strategies, among many others.
- Several years ago, RAND analysis identified a gap in the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan by examining “village stability operations” in other countries and other wars; in follow-on efforts, RAND researchers designed a strategy to engage the local population in defensive operations, customized the strategy for different parts of the country, and supported the U.S. Special Operations Command in both implementing the strategy and measuring its effectiveness. The resulting rural security programs and the development of local defense forces are now a key element of the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan.
- At the local level, the Los Angeles City Council voted to direct the Department of Transportation to examine Moving Los Angeles, the 2008 RAND report on traffic congestion in Los Angeles, and implement its findings. The RAND research team extended the reach of its analysis through journal articles and commentary, and now several of RAND’s recommendations are being pursued, including the development of high-occupancy toll lanes on the I-10 and I-110 freeways, bus-only lanes on Wilshire Boulevard, and the test trial of variable parking prices in downtown Los Angeles.

A review of 2011 would not be complete without a reference to the retraction of a published report because of a serious error. We detected the error, but not during our formal quality assurance process. Fortunately, this kind of mistake is rare, but when it occurs the damage is serious. People have come to equate the RAND name with excellence, and, as a consequence, they expect our analyses to be correct, accurate, and objective. Although we failed in this instance, we owned up to the mistake, we are redoing the analysis, and we are learning from the error and applying the lessons so that we reduce the chances of a reoccurrence. The episode is a reminder of how powerful and valuable the RAND name is and of how necessary it is to strive continuously to strengthen our quality assurance processes.

Notwithstanding the challenges, I and the others who lead RAND are committed to ensuring that RAND’s research and analysis will make an increasingly larger impact in the years ahead. We will marshal the considerable resources of RAND, including our advisory boards, alumni, trustees, collective professional contacts, and the Office of External Affairs, to make this happen.