

SAB/BOSC Meeting Charge Questions

June 29-30, 2011

Background

Beginning with FY2012, the Office of Research and Development (ORD) is restructuring its research programs to enable EPA to meet the complex environmental challenges of the 21st century. The focus will be on developing a deeper understanding of environmental problems and informing sustainable solutions to meet EPA's strategic goals.

To facilitate this review, ORD will provide the joint committee of the Science Advisory Board (SAB) and the Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC) with presentations and written documents that characterize the research directions envisioned for these programs and the ongoing stakeholder engagement process. ORD will also participate in meetings with the SAB/BOSC to discuss program information.

Tentative Charge

The Agency requests that the SAB/BOSC consider and comment on the ORD's strategic directions for research. ORD's re-aligned research structure is comprised of six research program areas, replacing the previous 13 programs. The focus of this activity will be on the strategic directions for the six program areas:

- Air, Climate, and Energy
- Safe and Sustainable Water Resources
- Sustainable and Healthy Communities
- Chemical Safety for Sustainability
- Human Health Risk Assessment
- Homeland Security

The six programs are in different stages of development, including the process of completing research framework documents and consulting with EPA partners and external stakeholders. Over the summer, the ORD laboratories will be developing research project plans to respond to the strategic needs and desired program outputs and outcomes. ORD is consulting with the SAB/BOSC at an early stage in the process of defining strategic program directions. The SAB/BOSC is requested to provide EPA with advice on the following:

- a. To what extent do the draft research frameworks describe EPA's National Program and Regional Offices strategic science priorities? How well do ORD's research programs align with those priorities? If resources allow, what are areas for increased emphasis? If resources decline, what areas might be appropriate for decreased emphasis?

- b. How can ORD enhance coordination among its research programs, and better ensure that they complement one another?
- c. How well do ORD's proposed research directions reflect its commitment to sustainably protecting human health and the environment?
- d. How do the six programs fit together as an integrated environmental research strategy, charged with informing decisions on the nation's most-critical environmental issues? Are these programs positioned to address the nation's highest priority, emerging environmental issues in the coming years?
- e. Based on Board members' familiarity with efforts in the broader scientific community, how well do ORD's research programs appear to catalyze and complement environmental science programs elsewhere? What suggestions do the members have for how EPA's research programs could improve upon their leveraging with those of others?
- f. How does the SAB/BOSC view ORD's activities in stimulating innovative research and what other suggestions would the SAB/BOSC have to promote innovation in EPA research?