

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers for External Experts Interested in Serving on EPA Science Advisory Board (SAB) Dioxin Review Panel

EPA has requested the SAB advice on revisions to its 2003 draft *Dioxin Reassessment, Exposure and Human Health Reassessment of 2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzo-p-Dioxin (TCDD) and Related Compounds*, based on comments provided by the National Academy of Science (NAS) in its 2006 report, *Health Risks from Dioxin and Related Compounds: Evaluation of the EPA Reassessment*. Accordingly, the SAB Staff Office is in the process of forming an SAB Dioxin Review Panel. The Panel will provide independent expert advice to EPA regarding its draft technical plan, revised draft, and final draft of EPA response to the recommendations of the NAS.

EPA has announced its plan to convene a workshop on February 18-20, 2009 to discuss recent scientific literature on dioxin (<http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-RESEARCH/2008/December/Day-29/r30811.htm>). The workshop is open to the public and EPA will invite external scientist participation. Due to timing constraints, external experts may be invited to participate in the workshop during the SAB Panel formation process. Common questions often arise among invited workshop participants about the potential impact of workshop participation and their eligibility for serving on SAB Dioxin Review Panel. This fact sheet provides general background on the SAB Panel formation process and addresses frequently asked questions about this matter.

Panel Formation Process

The SAB Staff Office establishes Advisory or Review Panels in accordance with the process described in the document, *SAB Panel Formation Process: Immediate Steps to Improve Policies and Procedures* (EPA-SAB-EC-COM-02-003). The process provides the public an opportunity to nominate experts and to comment on the “short list” candidates. The SAB Staff Office Director makes the final decision about the Panel membership based on all relevant information. Primary selection criteria include diversity and balance of needed expertise and scientific viewpoints, absence of financial conflict of interest, absence of an appearance of a lack of impartiality, and willingness to serve.

Prospective candidates are required to submit a Confidential Financial Disclosure Form for Special Government Employees (EPA Form 3110-48). To evaluate and determine an absence of an appearance of a lack of impartiality, prospective candidates are asked to respond to the following questions:

- (a) Do you know of any reason that you might be unable to provide impartial advice on this matter or any reason that your impartiality in the matter might be questioned?
- (b) Have you had any previous involvement with the EPA’s documents under consideration (including authorship, collaboration with the authors, or peer review functions)? If so, please identify and describe that involvement.

- (c) Have you served on previous advisory panels, committees or subcommittees (Federal or otherwise) that have addressed the topic under consideration? If so please identify those activities.
- (d) Have you made any public statements that would indicate to an observer that you have taken a position on the issue under consideration? If so, please identify those statements.

In addition, invited experts are required to take EPA's on-line Ethics Training Course for Special Government Employees. The course provides an overview of basic principles regarding the conduct of business under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) to ensure that advisory panel members fulfill their ethics requirements and maintain public trust.

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Question 1: If I accept EPA's invitation to participate in the workshop, am I eligible to serve on the SAB Dioxin Review Panel?

Answer: Yes, as long as there is neither financial conflict of interest nor an appearance of a lack of impartiality (see the evaluative process described above).

Question 2: I have been asked by EPA to present my research findings at this workshop. Am I eligible to serve on the SAB Panel?

Answer: Yes, it is appropriate for you to present new scientific information in areas of your expertise and suggest that EPA consider such information for the dioxin reassessment. However, you should refrain from making any public statements that would indicate to an observer that you have taken a specific scientific position on the assessment (see question "e" under appearance of a lack of impartiality).

Question 3: I am interested in participating in the EPA workshop but want to avoid the appearance of a lack of impartiality that might preclude me from being invited to serve on the SAB Panel. Please provide general guidance.

Answer: The answer is similar to questions 1 and 2. You are free to share your scientific views on scientific questions or raise issues for EPA's consideration. However, you should refrain from articulating a position on the assessment such that an observer may question your impartiality.

Question 4: I am now invited to serve on the SAB Panel and invited to participate in EPA's workshop. Please provide guidance as to my role as a workshop participant.

Answer: You are free to share your scientific views on specific scientific issues or raise issues for EPA's consideration. However, to avoid the appearance of lack of impartiality you should refrain from making any public statements such that an observer may question your impartiality. You should always be in compliance with FACA and federal ethics requirements.

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If questions arise, please contact Dr. Tom Armitage, SAB Designated Federal Officer via e-mail at armitage.thomas@epa.gov or by phone at (202)-343-9995.