

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Board of Scientific Counselors

Executive Committee

Virtual Meeting Summary

April 24, 2024

Dates and Times: April 24, 2024, 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time

Location: Virtual

Executive Summary

On April 24, 2024, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC) Executive Committee (EC) convened in a virtual meeting. The goal of the 1-day meeting was to discuss the draft reports from the Climate Change (CC) and Social and Community Science (SCS) Subcommittees. The virtual meeting format allowed for presentations, open dialogue, program feedback, deliberations and questions, and EPA responses to questions.

Wednesday, April 24, 2024

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Mr. Tom Tracy, Designated Federal Officer, Office of Science, Advisor, Policy, and Engagement (OSAPE) welcomed the Executive Committee and thanked the participants for joining. He then welcomed introductions from the EC members.

Dr. Christopher Frey, Assistant Administrator, Office of Research of Development (ORD) welcomed the BOSC EC and CC and SCS subcommittees and thanked Mr. Tracy for his work as DFO of the BOSC. He described the focuses of the charge questions given to the CC and SCS subcommittees and stated ORD's appreciation for the time and input given to the important topics being discussed. He acknowledged that a systematic approach is necessary in science and research around climate change to understand the connection to human health. Within the EPA, ORD is working to build a social science workforce. Dr. Frey thanked the BOSC EC co-chairs, Dr. Johnson and Dr. Gilman, for their leadership and thanked everyone for their dedicated efforts developing reports, insights, and ideas.

Review Meeting Agenda & Process

Dr. Johnson thanked Mr. Tracy and Dr. Frey for their introductory remarks. The co-chairs of the CC and SCS subcommittees presented their suggestions for the charge questions.

Climate Change and Social and Community Science Joint Subcommittee Presentation

Dr. Wilson introduced the subcommittee's recommendations for Charge Question 1, which focuses on integrating social sciences in ORD's portfolio. The subcommittee identified ORD's strengths and noted that the first steps of hiring and inclusion of social scientists in leadership positions were positive. Dr. Wilson added that the focus on "solutions-driven research approach" required collaboration between scientists from different disciplines.

Dr. Wilson discussed the subcommittee's suggestions, including increasing investment in social scientists at ORD; a focus on hiring; increasing social scientists in leadership roles; training on team science and community engagement; establishing best practices in transdisciplinary team science; and expanding capacity for community engagement and professional development. The subcommittee recognized the interest in community-engaged research, environmental justice, and similar efforts. Dr. Wilson provided details about a suggested hiring matrix to identify candidates meeting ORD's needs. Dr. Wilson then displayed and read the subcommittee's summary recommendations, which include evaluating how social science can contribute long-term across EPA.

Participants shared comments suggesting inclusion of behavioral economists, support for the subcommittee recommendations, proposing emphasis on efforts surrounding statutes and emergency response, and desire for increased community engagement funding and partnerships.

Dr. Madrigano thanked the co-chairs and presented the questions from Charge Question 2. She highlighted the strengths of ORD, such as the establishment of the Integrated Climate Sciences Division (ICSD) and achieving an interdisciplinary climate science capacity, environmental justice research, cross-cutting topic integration, ongoing outreach to connect state and local agencies, and efforts on climate-related exposure response functions.

Dr. Madrigano discussed the subcommittee's suggestions related to Charge Question 2, which included holistic approaches to addressing compounding climate risk, evaluating social impacts of climate action, inter-agency collaboration to provide risk guidance to communities following disasters, capacity building, and increased private sector engagement on novel climate adaptation strategies. Dr. Madrigano provided additional suggestions related to regulatory missions, research on air quality linked to climate change, and indoor environment. She then listed other suggestions focused on research topics, including stressors, downscaling climate impacts, and emerging technologies for direct GHG removal. She also provided suggestions on capacity enhancement, the need for assessment and evaluation of current programs, enhancement of Regional Climate Assistance Network (RCAN) processes, and integration of efforts related to mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. Dr. Madrigano then summarized the subcommittee's recommendations. First, the subcommittee recommended ORD continue emphasizing climate change as a cross-cutting research priority in all research centers and programs. Second, to develop guidance on integrating different types of data, including processes to extract and translate lessons learned.

Dr. Corley provided an overview of Charge Question 3, focused on place-based research. Charge Questions 1 and 2 overlapped with Charge Question 3 regarding grant-making, ORD's limited resources, and the inability to force community collaboration. Dr. Corley acknowledged the strengths of ORD, such as effective place-based work, community and university collaboration, and integration of community-based methodologies such as storytelling and lived experiences.

Dr. Corley shared the subcommittee's suggestions related to Charge Question 3, including best practices for working with Tribes and communities, inter- and intra-agency collaboration, and building communication, relationships, and trust with communities.

Dr. Corley shared the next set of the subcommittee's suggestions related to Charge Question 3, addressing cultural competency, different ways of knowing and sharing information, adapting methods for individual communities, and equitable data sharing. Dr. Corley then discussed the committee's suggestions related to Charge Question 2, including reducing community burden through understanding the environmental burdens or limited adaptive capacity of different communities, recognizing the importance of research grade, low-cost sensors and improve their quality and resolution, and understanding that community residents impact mitigation strategies and that context matters in the interpretation of scientific information.

Dr. Ristroph explained that Charge Question 3 builds on Charge Question 2 and focuses on how mitigation and adaptation can be researched at the place-based level. She discussed the committee's suggestions on the consideration for individual abilities, how people work with researchers, and the community's ability to access the research. Furthermore, climate resilience requires addressing the "big picture" for the community.

Dr. Ristroph continued with the committee's suggestions related to Charge Question 3. Suggestions focused on best practices for collaboration with communities and other agencies, connecting communities to resources, research design, and equitable treatment.

Dr. Ristroph provided the committee's final recommendations to Charge Question 3. First, to involve the community in the entire research process, with links to related resources. Second, to emphasize working with other agencies, with links to further resources for cooperating methods.

EPA Comments and Questions to CC and SCS Joint Subcommittee Presentation

Dr. Louie Rivers introduced himself and thanked the CC and SCS subcommittees. He provided an update on the successful hiring and onboarding of fourteen new social scientists and the newly created community of practice in ORD.

Dr. Hubbell shared his appreciation for the CC and SCS subcommittees' guidance on improving the social science research program. He acknowledged the suggestion to hire more social scientists to have maximum impact across ORD. Dr. Hubbell spoke in support of social science research in ORD including community capacity workshops, a webpage for stakeholder engagement, and collaborating with other organizations.

Dr. Dodder thanked the CC and SCS subcommittees and stated that more staff have been hired for the Integrated Climate Sciences Division (ICSD). She appreciated the recognition that the EPA was part of a larger group of federal agencies.

Dr. Rivers thanked the BOSC for their work and insightful feedback on Charge Question 3. He stated that ORD is committed to equitable relationships with research partners and will include more production principles in the future.

Dr. Lucinda Johnson thanked the subcommittees for their suggestions and recommendations. She stated that having social scientists and physical/biological scientists work together can be difficult. Understanding what constitutes data and how data is managed is important. She asked whether EPA could provide a summary of what has constituted the new hiring with respect to

social scientists at EPA – what disciplines were onboarded, near-term plans for future onboarding and hiring, and whether there will be further hires. Dr. Louie Rivers presented a chart of the social sciences workforce at EPA and noted the broad range of expertise and research skills in the social scientists hired within ORD and ICSD.

Dr. Bruce Rodan emphasized that the federal onboarding process is lengthy, but this is a White House and Agency priority. Dr. Bryan Hubbell noted that there are plans to bring in social scientists focused on social determinants of health.

BOSC EC Deliberation – Joint Subcommittee Report

Dr. Teichman appreciated the suggestion in Charge Question 1 regarding the importance of ecological impacts. Dr. Johnson agreed and stated that the “one health, one environment” perspective helps tie human health and environmental health together.

Dr. Johnson appreciated the priorities stated in Charge Question 2 and felt the recommendation of integrating different data was important.

Dr. Woodruff thanked the CC and SCS subcommittees for their efforts. She agreed with Dr. Teichman that it should be strategic in what is recommended for implementation with EPA’s limited resources.

Dr. Ristroph stated that communities should have the opportunity to give input on the prioritization of suggestions. Dr. Woodruff suggested developing frameworks for place-based research processes. Participants discussed and agreed that the phrase “toolkit” is better fitting than “framework” regarding research done in tandem with different communities. Dr. Woodruff suggested that the recommendation should be to choose a more specific framework to reach an agreement in the place-based research structure. Dr. Teichman asked everyone to keep in mind that EPA is not a regulatory agency.

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Closing Remarks and Next Steps

Dr. Bruce Rodan thanked everyone for their work on the report and described how previous BOSC recommendations are being implemented today. Dr. Rodan sincerely thanked Dr. Johnson and Dr. Gilman for their leadership, time, and work as co-chairs of the BOSC EC. Dr. Johnson thanked Dr. Rodan for his comments and reflected on his time as a co-chair of the BOSC EC and the work done by BOSC.

Adjourn Meeting

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:00 p.m., Eastern Time.

Meeting Agenda and Other Meeting Materials

The [agenda](#)¹ and other meeting materials can be accessed at [Executive Committee Meeting - April 24, 2024 | US EPA](#).

Meeting Participants

BOSC Executive Committee Members:

Paul Gilman, *Chair*
Lucinda Johnson, *Vice Chair*
Laureen Monica Boles
G. Allen Burton
Michelle Crimi
Gilbert Gee
Patrick Kinney
Jaime Madrigano
Ellen Mantus
Pamela McElwee
Jayne Morrow
Anjali Mulchandani
Mahmoud Saleh
Kevin Teichman
George Thurston
Crystal Upperman
Tracey Woodruff
Robyn Wilson

EPA Designated Federal Officer (DFO): Tom Tracy, *Office of Science Advisor, Policy, and Engagement*

Presenters:

H. Christopher Frey, PhD, *Assistant Administrator, Office of Research and Development*
Bruce Rodan, *Associate Director for Science, Office of Research and Development*
Paul Gilman, *BOSC EC Co-chair*
Lucinda Johnson, *BOSC EC Co-chair*
Robyn Wilson, PhD, *SCS SC Co-Chair*
Gilbert Gee, PhD, *SCS SC Co-Chair*
Barrett Ristroph, JD, PhD (*CQ3 Co-Lead*)
Tracy Corley, PhD, *CQ3 Co-Lead*
Bryan Hubbell, *National Program Director, Air, Climate, and Energy Research Program*
Louie Rivers, *Senior Social Science Advisor, Office of Research and Development*
Rebecca Dodder, *Associate National Program Director, Air, Climate, and Energy Research Program*

¹ [agenda 1.pdf \(epa.gov\)](#)

Other EPA Attendees:

Troy D. Hill
Emily Sokol
Mary Ross
Rose Leek
Veerani Tailor
Kacee Deener
Canfield Kaytee

Other Attendees:

Barrett Ristroph (Expert Consultant – BOSC Social and Community Science Subcommittee)
Tracy Corley, PhD (CQ3 Co-Lead)
Ed Monachino
Linda Wilson

Contractor Support:

Madison Clark
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