

**DRAFT CHARGE FOR MID-CYCLE REVIEW  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABILITY  
BOSC SUBCOMMITTEE**

**1.0 Objectives.** The objectives of this mid-cycle review are:

1. To evaluate the progress made by the Office of Research and Development (ORD) Science and Technology for Sustainability Research Program towards completing the commitments it made in response to the initial BOSC program review (April 25-26, 2007), and
2. To evaluate and obtain advice on key future directions for the research program which have been developed and other potential areas that could be considered.

**2.0 Background Information.** Independent expert review is used extensively in industry, federal agencies, Congressional committees, and academia. The National Academy of Science has recommended this approach for evaluating federal research programs.<sup>1</sup>

For the Agency's environmental research programs, periodic independent reviews are conducted at intervals of four or five years to characterize research progress, to identify when clients are applying research to strengthen environmental decisions, and to evaluate client feedback about the research. Mid-cycle evaluations are an important part of this program review process. Scheduled midway through the review cycle, these independent assessments give ORD an opportunity to gauge the program's progress relative to the commitments it made following its last review.

For the upcoming mid-cycle review, the Science and Technology for Sustainability Research Program is preparing a progress report that will provide the context for discussions during the meeting. The report will identify progress the program has made towards its long-term goals, and changes implemented by the program in response to BOSC's major recommendations from the 2007 review.

The STS Program has undergone significant changes since the initial BOSC review. The changes are based upon (1) the BOSC 2007 recommendations, (2) feedback from the 2006 OMB PART review, (3) significant emerging issues in the sustainability arena, and (4) budget and organizational changes in EPA. As a result, ORD has initiated work on a few key emerging areas of science, e.g., biofuels and green building issues.

Several documents will be provided to the Subcommittee to use in addressing the charge questions. ORD will provide two tables that summarize the changes to the overall program. Additional documents include, but are not limited to, the latest versions of the STS MYP, the US EPA Biofuels Strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> Evaluating Federal Research under the Government Performance and Results Act (National Research Council, 1999).

This review is not intended to be the in-depth technical evaluation of a full program review. Presentation time will be minimized in favor of discussion.

### **3.0 Charge Questions for ORD's Science and Technology Sustainability Research Program.**

ORD is interested in receiving feedback concerning the following questions:

1. *How responsive has the Science and Technology for Sustainability (STS) Research Program been to the recommendations made in the April 2007 BOSC program review report? The subcommittee will evaluate progress made regarding "commitments" to the BOSC recommendations as outlined in ORD's response. Specifically, the BOSC will evaluate the accomplishments and effectiveness of the funded research.*
2. *How clear is the rationale for the Science and Technology for Sustainability Research Program as described in the documents provided to the Subcommittee? Is it consistent with the advice previously given by the BOSC?*
3. *If needed, what additional performance metrics (e.g., quality and impact of publications, timeliness of completing goals) might be appropriate for the Science and Technology for Sustainability Research Program?*
4. *What changes could the program make to enhance the impact of the research products and complement other existing efforts in the field? How should products be delivered to ensure they are used within and outside the Agency, thereby contributing the greatest value?*
5. *Given the need to strategically focus the STS program on national environmental priorities, is the initial focus on Biofuels appropriate considering the STS Long Term Goals? If so, is the proposed program appropriately designed to address these important issues?*
6. *Are there any other areas of national significance in the near term that the program should address?*

### **4.0 Summary Assessment**

In developing a short report that responds to the above charge questions, the BOSC Mid-cycle Subcommittee should provide a summary assessment, including a single qualitative rating, which reflects the extent to which the program is making progress in response to the BOSC review of 2007. The rating should be in the form of one of the adjectives defined below, which are intended to promote consistency among BOSC program reviews. The adjective should be used as part of a narrative summary of the review, so that the context of the rating and the rationale for selecting a particular rating will be transparent. For mid-cycle reviews, the rating should be based on the quality, speed, and success of the program's actions in addressing previous BOSC recommendations. The adjectives to describe progress are:

- o **Exceptional:** indicates that the program is meeting all and exceeding some of its goals, both in the quality of the science being produced and the speed at which research result tools and methods are being produced. An exceptional rating also indicates that the program is addressing the right questions to achieve its goals. The review should be specific as to which aspects of the program's performance have been exceptional.

- o Exceeds Expectations: indicates that the program is meeting all of its goals. It addresses the appropriate scientific questions to meet its goals, and the science is competent or better. It exceeds expectations for either the high quality of the science or for the speed at which work products are being produced and milestones met.
- o Meets Expectations: indicates that the program is meeting most of its goals. Programs meet expectations in terms of addressing the appropriate scientific questions to meet their goals, and work products are being produced and milestones are being reached in a timely manner. The quality of the science being done is competent or better.
- o Not Satisfactory: indicates that the program is failing to meet a substantial fraction of its goals, or if meeting them, that the achievement of milestones is significantly delayed, or that the questions being addressed are inappropriate or insufficient to meet the intended purpose. Questionable science is also a reason for rating a program as unsatisfactory for a particular long-term goal. The review should be specific as to which aspects of a program's performance have been inadequate.

## **5.0 Subcommittee Approach for Mid-Cycle Review**

- Hold one (1) combined administrative and technical (public) teleconference prior to the face-to-face meeting.
  - ▶ Allows subcommittee to become familiar with Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) meeting requirements.
  - ▶ Allows the subcommittee Chair to make review and writing assignments.
  - ▶ Allows the ORD to present background and other relevant materials to the subcommittee.
  - ▶ Allows the subcommittee to ask clarifying questions.
  - ▶ EPA shall distribute background materials and documents requested by the Subcommittee in advance of the teleconference calls.
- Hold a one-day face-to-face meeting for the mid-cycle review.
  - ▶ The meeting will include brief ORD presentations on program progress.
  - ▶ Members of the Science and Technology for Sustainability Mid-Cycle Subcommittee will ask questions and discuss the progress with ORD representatives.
  - ▶ Subcommittee members will draft portions of the short report.
- Hold one (1) teleconference call within one month following the face-to-face meeting to finalize the draft short report.