

**U.S. EPA Office of Research and Development (ORD)**  
**Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC) Executive Committee (Supplemented)**  
**Virtual Meeting: July 6, 2021**

Charge Questions: Barriers to Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities

On January 20, 2021, President Biden issued [Executive Order 13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#). The Executive Order seeks to improve the equitable distribution of Federal goods and services to hitherto disadvantaged communities, notably people of color and other underserved groups. These include religious minorities, LGBTQ persons, persons with disabilities, people in rural areas, and those in persistent poverty. Agencies are to review programs and policies to assess whether underserved communities and their members face systemic barriers in accessing benefits and opportunities available pursuant to those policies and programs. EPA considers “Research and Community Science” to be a federal service and benefit for evaluation under this Executive Order. Other EPA benefits and services under evaluation include rulemaking and permitting, data collection, stakeholder engagement and communication, grants and financing, and contracts.

The “Research and Community Science” barriers-evaluation workgroup has adopted and clarified definitions for this activity, and undertaken an initial evaluation of barriers based on the perspectives of different stakeholders relevant to the research. We seek to refine this initial evaluation with your input. Importantly, as reflected in the following charge questions, “research” in this context relates to activities conducted or sponsored by EPA, and subject to relevant EPA science policies and quality and peer review standards, etc. “Community science” is defined here as research and science conducted by the community and/or a third party on their behalf to inform decision making, and not necessarily beholden to EPA policies and standards.

The initial evaluation of barriers to equity will serve as a prelude to required Agency plans, within one year, to address identified barriers to full and equal participation in “Research and Community Science.” Hence, this initial charge to the BOSC is limited to the barriers aspect of the Executive Order. EPA will be initiating additional rounds of consultation as we move to address the identified barriers and plan relevant research activities later this year. These implementation activities are likely to include, *inter alia*, expansion of equity/environmental justice consideration across ORD’s research portfolios, improved methods for community engagement, and cumulative risk methods.

**Charge Question 1: Equity in Research**

**Q.1a:** With regard to the identification, prioritization, funding, and conduct of intramural and extramural research by EPA, what barriers exist to the equitable distribution of the benefits and services of EPA’s research to people of color and underserved communities?

**Q.1b:** Based on familiarity with ORD's research programs and workforce expertise, which structural, cultural, and/or other barriers must be overcome to optimize the organization's capacity to conduct research of most relevance and utility to people of color and communities most in need?

**Charge Question 2: Community Science**

**Q.2:** What scientific, cultural, structural, and other barriers need to be addressed to facilitate the use of community science to advance equity goals in decision making, including barriers to equitable access of community voices and use of community data (qualitative and quantitative) at different levels of governance, from local, to state and Federal. What barriers need to be overcome to increase the receptivity of government organizations to considering community science in their decision-making processes?