

# U.S. EPA Office of Research and Development

## Charge to the Board of Scientific Counselors

### Subcommittee for the Sustainable and Healthy Communities (SHC) National Research Program

#### Virtual Meeting on June 16 & 17, 2020

**Introduction:** The mission of the EPA Office of Research and Development (ORD) is to provide the best available science and technology to inform and support public health and environmental decision-making at Federal, state, tribal, and local levels. This leading-edge research addresses critical environmental challenges and anticipates future science needs. Through 2018-19, ORD benefited from input from the Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC) on our strategic research topics and outputs for six Strategic Research Action Plans (StRAPs):

- Air and Energy (A-E)
- Safe and Sustainable Water Resources (SSWR)
- Sustainable and Healthy Communities (SHC)
- Chemical Safety for Sustainability (CSS)
- Homeland Security Research Program (HSRP)
- Health and Environmental Risk Assessment (HERA)

Taking into consideration BOSC input on the StRAPs, ORD worked closely with our partners in EPA programs and regions, states, and tribes to identify specific products that address their priority needs. This engagement process was conducted through Research Area Coordination Teams (RACTs), drawing membership from across the Agency, and included a pilot program to directly engage state scientists and a formal Tribal consultation. Following this detailed planning phase, ORD is now transitioning from the “what and when” to the “who and how”, i.e., from planning to implementation. ORD’s request for BOSC input is now focused on the implementation phase. The objective is to have each BOSC Subcommittee cover the full portfolio of the relevant research programs within a two-year BOSC review cycle.

#### BOSC Review of Research Areas 9 and 10 (June 16 & 17, 2020)

SHC’s StRAP is set-up as a series of problem statements with solutions. SHC adopted this approach to better describe and address the needs of research partners and collaborators inside and outside the EPA. In the BOSC Subcommittee review of the SHC StRAP (April 2019), the committee wrote that it “look(ed) forward to seeing the implementation plan . . . to identify how the problems identified in the StRAP will be addressed”.

The current BOSC review is focused on Research Areas 9: Community Benefits from Remediation, Restoration, and Revitalization, and Research Area 10: Community Driven Solutions. This current review is designed to give the subcommittee the opportunity to learn about the details of research implementation in these areas and how this research is designed to address the needs of the Agency and the public. SHC asks the subcommittee to weigh in on gaps that remain in this part of the program, processes for continued partner-engaged research, and specific recommendations for how to make the proposed research more effective at meeting partner needs and addressing high priority environmental science needs.

### **Charge Questions**

Q.1: BOSC subcommittee members have been provided a summary of planned research products related to research areas 9 & 10 for review at this BOSC meeting. After reviewing these materials, combined with the presentations provided during the 2-day virtual meeting, are there any critical gaps that would preclude accomplishing the environmental science goals of RA 9 and 10? Please provide recommendations for addressing those.

Q.2: The combined StRAP and Research Area Coordination Team (RACT) process was resource intensive for both ORD scientists and partner organizations. Yet, this engagement has clearly vested EPA programs and regions, states, and tribes in the research to be conducted, and heightened their interest in participation with ORD and in the outcomes of the work. ORD is seeking BOSC input on effective ways to maintain this mutual engagement and communication between researchers and our research partners as we go forward with implementation.