

Social Sciences Branch Review Panel

Terms of Reference

General Panel Responsibilities

With the exception of the chair, all review panel members (both internal and external) have equal roles and responsibilities in conducting a programmatic review of the NEFSC Social Sciences Branch. This includes reviewing documents provided in advance of the review meeting, attending and participating in a three-day review meeting of the Branch, contributing to the production of a final report of the review panel's findings and recommendations (due at the end of the review meeting), and being responsive to any follow-up required at the conclusion of the review. Review panel activities during the course of the three-day review meeting include attending presentations by Center staff, meeting with Center staff and stakeholders to obtain essential information, presenting on the panel's findings, and submitting the principal findings and recommendations of the panel at the end of the meeting. The report of the Review Panel should be finalized and submitted to the Center within a month of the review meeting (i.e., no later than 19 August 2011).

B. The Chair's Responsibilities

The Review Panel Chair shares the same responsibilities as the other panel members, but is also responsible for organizing and submitting the panel's final report. Other review panel members are expected to contribute to the final report, but the extent and type of these contributions are left to the discretion of the Chair. Within the final report, the Chair will summarize any independent opinions and recommendations of the panelists, as well as present all consensus findings and recommendations of the Panel. The Chair will also orally communicate the consensus findings and recommendations during a final presentation at the review meeting.

Time Commitment Required by Review Panel Members

All panelists are expected to attend the three-day review. Additional time will be required to review Center documentation in advance of the review, and will likely also be required after the review meeting in providing written contributions to the Chair for the final report. Review planning, coordination, and logistics will be handled by Center staff and are, therefore, not the responsibility of the panel members.

Review Panel Reports

The review panel will provide a written report on their findings and recommendations in the format of a Chairman's report. The report will be completed and submitted within a month of the conclusion of the review meeting at the Center (i.e., by 19 August 2011). The Social Sciences Branch will then have the option of providing a written response to the report to the Center Directorate. Once all the reviews and Center responses have been completed, the Center Directorate will (a) synthesize the Panel report and the Branch response; and (b) develop an action plan to respond to the findings and recommendations.

Appendix: Evaluation Questions to Help Guide the Review Panel

1. *Quality*: Assess the quality of the Branch's work. Assess whether appropriate approaches are in place to ensure that high quality work will be performed in the future. Assess progress toward meeting NOAA's implicit goals for its Centers to support agency management and conduct research using indicators as described below:

Types of Indicators can include the following

- a. The Branch's total (but separately tallied) number of management and refereed publications per unit time and/or per scientific Full Time Equivalent staff.
- b. Awards won by individuals within the Branch
- c. Memberships and involvement in prestigious organizations (e.g., the North American Association of Fishery Economists, American Anthropological Association, the National Academies of Science, etc.).
- d. Service of individuals in technical and scientific societies such as journal editorships, election to boards or executive level offices, service on U.S. interagency groups, service of individuals on boards and committees of international research-coordination organizations.
- e. A list of management and research products, information and services and an assessment of their impact by end users.
- f. Participation or leadership in national and international state-of-science assessments.
- g. Evidence of collaboration with other national and international research groups, both inside and outside of NOAA as well as reimbursable support from non-NOAA sponsors.
- h. Significance and impact of involvement with Cooperative Research and Development Agreements and other activities with industry.
- i. Other forms of recognition from NOAA information customers such as decision makers in government, private industry, the media, education communities, and the public.

2. *Relevance*: Assess the degree to which the research and development is relevant to NOAA's mission and of value to the Nation.

- a. Does the Branch's work address existing (or future) relevant societal needs (national and international)?
- b. How well does the Branch address issues identified in NOAA research plans or other policy and guidance documents?
- c. Are customers and stakeholders engaged to ensure relevance of the research?
- d. Are there topics relevant to NOAA and NMFS needs that the Branch should be pursuing but is not?

3. *Performance*: Assess the overall effectiveness with which the Branch plans and conducts its research, development, and management support responsibilities, given the resources provided, to meet NOAA and NMFS Strategic Plan objectives and the needs of the nation. The evaluation will be conducted within the context of three sub-categories: leadership and planning, efficiency and effectiveness, and transition of research to applications.

- a. Leadership and Planning. Assess whether the Branch has clearly defined objectives, scope, and methodologies for its key projects.
 - Does the Branch have clearly defined and documented scientific and/or management support objectives, rationales and methodologies for key projects?
 - Has the scope of key projects been identified including methods for determining when areas of investigation should end or be transitioned to operations or information services?

- b. Efficiency and Effectiveness: Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the Branch's research, development, and management support activities given the Branch's goals, resources, and constraints, and evaluate how well the Branch obtains needed resources through NOAA and other sources.
 - Does the Branch execute its research and management activities in an efficient and effective manner?
 - Is the Branch organized and managed to optimize the conduct and planning of research, including the support of creativity?
 - Is the proportion of the external funding appropriate relative to its NOAA funding?
 - Are human resources adequate to meet current and future needs? Is the Branch organized and managed to ensure diversity in its workforce?
 - Are appropriate resources and support services available?

- c. Transition: How well has the Branch delivered products? Assess the Branch's effectiveness in transitioning and disseminating its research into applications (operations and information services).
 - How well is the transition of research to applications and dissemination of knowledge planned and executed?
 - Are there appropriate interactions with stakeholders and customers? Are end users of the research and development involved in the planning and delivery of applications and information services?
 - Are the research results effectively communicated to stakeholders and the public?