

NOAA Science Council Terms of Reference

NOAA Science Council Executive Secretariat

Revised September 2nd, 2020

Table of Contents

[Purpose](#)

[Mission](#)

[Council Roles and Responsibilities](#)

[Membership](#)

[Principal Members](#)

[Advisory Members](#)

[Other Meeting Attendees](#)

[Committees](#)

[Working Groups](#)

[Meetings, Council Management, and Coordination](#)

[Decision-Making Process](#)

[Terms of Reference Revision Process](#)

Purpose:

This document creates and defines the NOAA Science Council (previously known as the NOAA Research Council). The purpose of the NOAA Science Council is to coordinate all matters of research and development within NOAA and to provide strategic advice to NOAA leadership on matters of science and research, including social sciences.

Mission:

The mission of the NOAA Science Council is to engage on all matters of science, research, and development across the NOAA portfolio. The Council oversees NOAA's Research and Development (R&D) portfolio and may choose to provide a higher degree of oversight on specific topics. Within development, the Science Council oversees the transition of research to development to use. The decision to address topics outside of this scope may be made by the Chair of the Council in consultation with the Chairs of the other NOAA Councils to avoid potential duplication of effort or conflict.

Council Roles and Responsibilities:

The Council shall be guided by the appropriate governing documents, including, but not limited to, NOAA Administrative Orders (NAO), and may generate such documents as appropriate to fulfill the purpose of the Council. The Council may establish priorities within the research and development portfolio of NOAA and create subordinate bodies to address or implement its activities.

The Council shall endeavor to administer consistently across NOAA: NAO 202-735D, "Scientific Integrity"; NAO 216-105B, "Policy on Research and Development Transitions"; and NAO 216-115A, "Research and Development in NOAA"; and, such other NAOs or documents that the Research Council or higher authority may generate.

The Council shall establish Committees and working groups to support its activities. As appropriate, the Council will also establish working groups to complete discrete projects.

The Council shall keep abreast of new developments and priorities in relevant research and development inside and outside of NOAA. As a strategic council, the Science Council shall periodically report matters to the NOAA Executive Council (NEC) and the NOAA Administrator.

Council responsibilities include but are not limited to matters of:

- NOAA Policy for the conduct, management and dissemination of NOAA science;
- Scientific communication including fundamental research communications;

- State of the Science Fact Sheets review and approval;
- Oversight of the NOAA Cooperative Institute policy and program implementation,
- Coordination of NOAA engagement with the National Academies of Science; and,
- Oversight of NOAA-wide Science and Technology Strategies and Plans.

The Council will coordinate, as appropriate, with the other Strategy Councils and NOAA internal ad hoc groups engaged in research and development.

Membership:

Chair: NOAA Chief Scientist (or designee)

Vice Chair: OAR Assistant Administrator or in the case when the OAR Assistant Administrator is serving as the Acting Chief Scientist, the Science Council members nominate and vote on a Vice Chair.

The Science Council is a high-level advisory and coordinating body that reports to the NOAA Chief Scientist (or designee). Assistant Administrators (AAs) of each of NOAA's Line Offices (LOs) and the Director responsible for NOAA's fleet and aircraft assets shall appoint a member to the NOAA Science Council to represent their office's perspective on the R&D interests of NOAA. This person will be the chief science advisor for those offices having such a position, or a person with a comparable role in the office. Members shall be authorized to make policy and strategic decisions and speak on behalf of their office's leadership, particularly in the capacity of coordinating across offices to plan, monitor, evaluate, and report R&D.

The Science Council representative should closely coordinate with the AA, Strategic Planning Director, and Chief Financial Officer for their office. Principal and Advisory Members (or their designees) will constitute the core of the Science Council's regular attendees.

Principal Members:

In addition to the Chair and Vice Chair, Principal Members will include representatives from the following:

- Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR)
- National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
- National Ocean Service (NOS)
- National Weather Service (NWS)
- National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS)
- Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO)

AAs and the OMAO Director should review their representation on the Science Council annually to ensure the best fit. If a Principal Member is unable to attend a meeting, an alternate shall be sent with full authority to act on behalf of the Principal Member.

Advisory Members:

- Chairs of all Committees under the Council are ex-officio Advisory members of the councils
- Council of NOAA Fellows (CNF) Chair
- NOAA Science Advisory Board (SAB) Executive Director
- NOAA Chief Financial Officer
- NOAA Chief Information Officer
- NOAA Observing Systems Council (NOSC) Liaison
- NOAA Oceans and Coasts Council (NOC-C) Liaison
- NOAA Office of Education Liaison
- NOAA Scientific Integrity Officer
- Technology Partnerships Office Liaison

Advisory roles may be fulfilled by a Principal Member if a Principal Member holds an Advisory Member position specified above. Advisory Members may also appoint designees to serve in their stead.

Other Meeting Attendees:

Science Council meetings are generally open. However, any meeting or portion of meetings may be closed as necessary. Relevant staff from LOs and implementation planning teams are encouraged to attend Council meetings to express their views and support/advise Principal Members.

Committees:

The Science Council may form standing and ad hoc committees to achieve specific tasks. Such committees may include persons who are not members of the Science Council, but the Science Council shall include at least one Council member (may be a Principal or Advisory Member) on all committees.

Committee Chairs are *ex officio* Advisory Members of the Science Council and will attend all Science Council meetings or appoint a designee to do so. Committees will develop their own Terms of Reference based on requirements outlined by the Council. Terms of Reference for committees must be approved by the Council. The Science Council may terminate committees by majority vote of the Council.

The Science Council has eight standing committees (as of the date these Terms of Reference become effective, including:

1. A Research and Development Enterprise Committee (RDEC) shall help strengthen NOAA's R&D enterprise through effective planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.
2. A Committee of Line Office Transition Managers (LOTMC) shall focus on improving the effectiveness of NOAA's transitions of research to applications, on which the outcomes of NOAA's Strategic Goals critically depend.
3. A Cooperative Research Committee shall focus on compliance with policies for cooperative research activities (e.g. Cooperative Institutes, Cooperative Science Centers, etc.) and to assist the Science Council with general oversight of cooperative research.
4. A NOAA Libraries Advisory Committee (NLAC) shall advise the NOAA Research Council concerning the structure and operation of the NOAA Library System, working toward the vision of a Library System that is sustainable and meets the most critical needs for researchers and developers to continue accomplishing NOAA's mission.
5. A Unified Modeling Committee will plan, monitor, evaluate, and improve unified modeling within NOAA, and in a community effort with external partners.
6. A Social Science Committee shall advise on current and existing research and data needs, as well as challenges, to integrate social sciences in the agency's operations and decision making process.
7. A National Oceanographic Partnership Program Committee (NOPP-C) will work to improve the effectiveness of NOAA's participation in the NOPP, which facilitates partnerships between federal agencies, academia, and industry to advance ocean science research and education. The NOPP-C will coordinate NOPP activities within NOAA and provide guidance on the allocation of any dedicated NOAA NOPP funds.
8. A Science and Technology Synergy Committee - a cross-NOAA committee to drive synergy for strategic implementation of emerging science and technology, identify priorities, and develop best practices. This committee will initially include the following subcommittees: NOAA Artificial Intelligence, Unmanned Systems, 'Omics, Cloud, Data, EPIC, and Citizen Science. Subcommittees will be created and retired as necessary.

The Science Council will also coordinate, when appropriate, with the NOAA Scientific Integrity Committee, which is independent of the Council and reports to the Deputy Under Secretary for Operations and the Chief Scientist jointly.

When they are finalized, the Terms of Reference for each Committee are available on the Science Council website at <http://nrc.noaa.gov>.

Working Groups:

The Science Council may form working groups to complete specific projects as necessary. Nominees may include persons who are not members of the Science Council. The Science Council Chair and Vice Chair will have final approval of the composition of any working group. Working groups will operate under a Terms of Reference approved by the Science Council. The first item of business for a new working group will be to develop a draft Terms of Reference. Working groups will report back to the Science Council on the progress of their work as directed by the Science Council or as requested by the Working Group.

Meetings, Council Management, and Coordination:

Science Council meetings are generally held monthly, or as needed, and are scheduled for two hours per meeting unless more or less time is specifically requested by the Chair. Meetings will be led by the Chair, or in his/her absence, by the Vice Chair. When appropriate, meetings may be completely or partially closed to all but Principal Council members and Advisory Council members. Attendance by a majority of the Principal Council members (or their alternates) will constitute a quorum needed for decisional briefings. Conference call capabilities are routinely available, and participation via phone constitutes full attendance. In-person participation is expected when feasible. The Science Council manages the Science Council website (<http://nrc.noaa.gov>) and the Science Council's shared-site (currently Google Drive). All meeting minutes and official (approved) Science Council decisions and documents are stored and maintained on a shared site, along with current and past Science Council actions and upcoming meeting dates. Typically, meeting materials are posted to the Science Council materials site no later than the Thursday prior to a meeting.

Agenda items for consideration are submitted to the Executive Secretariat, and approved in advance by the Chair or Vice Chair. Agenda items are categorized as informational (e.g. to enhance situational awareness of the Science Council membership), directional (in which the Science Council discussion provides guidance for the entity bringing the item to the Science Council), or decisional (see below, for decision-making process).

Decision-Making Process:

The Science Council, with the support of Science Council staff, Committees, and Line and Staff Offices, will collect and analyze information to support its recommendations and its oversight responsibilities. Topics brought to the Science Council for consideration must be sponsored by a Principal or Advisory Member.

The Science Council strives for consensus when making decisions. Most decisions will be accomplished informally through informed consensus. The Chair will strive for consensus on every issue. Principal Science Council members each have one vote for each decisional item. In

the event of a tie, the presiding official (Chair or Vice Chair in the Chair's absence) will cast the tie-breaking vote. Principal Members may also move for a formal roll call vote on any decisional item for the record.

Terms of Reference Revision Process:

The Science Council will review this document every two years or at the request of the Chair to ensure continued accuracy and utility. Based on the recommendation of the Chair, the Science Council Executive Secretariat will draft revisions to the document as appropriate for approval by the Science Council. The Chair will approve the Terms of Reference for a decisional briefing to the Science Council. Once approved by the Science Council, the final Terms of Reference must be approved by the NEC to enter into effect.