

**DRAFT REPORT OF THE
2009 SBRP External Advisory Panel:
Positioning the Program for Future
Success**

SBRP External Advisory Panel

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Background

- This report presents **analyses** and **recommendations** of the External Advisory Panel (EAP).
- The EAP was established to provide guidance for the future direction of the Superfund Basic Research Program (SBRP).
- The EAP was charged with analyzing and providing recommendations on key scientific issues that should frame SBRP research, and identifying emerging issues for future research.
- The SBRP also asked the EAP for input on the basic structure of the program as well as mechanisms to accelerate the application of research outcomes.

Analytical Findings

- SBRP's quality research has increased knowledge, reduced uncertainty in risk assessment, and has helped incorporate scientific evidence into environmental policy and decision-making at Superfund sites.
- SBRP also provides an opportunity to connect emerging issues in managing and/or preventing exposure from releases of hazardous waste to the environment.
- Overall, SBRP activities fill an important niche in the science needs for site assessment and remediation, have had a positive impact on public health, and are worthy of continuation.

Analytical Findings (more)

- However, increased interactions among the Superfund Agencies and key stakeholders are likely to increase the impact of this Program.
- Future resources for SBRP are likely to be highly scrutinized and accountability will be emphasized. External pressures to apply these resources to the most critical questions of our day are likely to increase.
- Therefore, it is even more important that SBRP demonstrates wise and efficient use of its resources in the future.
- Most importantly, SBRP should significantly advance efforts to identify and prioritize new (or ongoing) areas of emphasis and investigation.

Recommendations

- Conduct a high-level strategic planning exercise to identify and promote research on emerging scientific issues critical for site assessment and remediation;
- Increase level of program integration and promote interactions among grantees; this includes interactions between R01 grantees and between R01 grantees and P42 multi-project grant or Centers programs;
- Increase emphasis on translation of research towards remediation activities;
- Promote effective and sensitive community outreach, especially as it pertains to communities affected by Superfund sites;

Recommendations (more)

- Ensure critical review of continuously-funded, multi-project grants;
- Develop and/or improve tools for assessing progress and achievements at the level of the individual grantee or multi-project Center, and for the SBRP as a whole;
- Develop metrics to assess the impact of SBRP research on the efficacy of site-remediation, decision making, and public policy. These metrics should be used to guide the future of research mechanisms and topics funded by the Program.

Areas for Action

STRATEGIC PLANNING

- Initiate a strategic planning effort
- Focus on specific questions
- Goal: to provide for clear program goals and priorities in the context of an appropriately balanced portfolio and a clear vision of the program's future directions.

Areas for Action

PRIORITY RESEARCH AREAS

- Potential effects of emerging toxicants and novel compounds, agents or activities
- Efficient remediation, waste reduction and energy efficiency
- Cumulative toxicity and risk assessment (includes complex toxicant mixtures)
- Improved approaches to support exposure assessment and modeling

Areas for Action

METRICS

- Require grantees to define and measure progress towards milestones on defined timetable
- Assess research impact through enhanced bibliometrics and novel approaches
- Appropriate metrics are especially needed for translation and outreach/communication

Areas for Action

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT

- Evaluate use of the R01 funding mechanism within SBRP
- Evaluate use of the P20 funding mechanism to increase funding of new investigators
- Consider augmenting program with K award and training grant mechanisms to train the next generation of SBRP-funded scientists

Areas for Action

COLLABORATION/COMMUNICATION

- Enhance research interactions among SBRP Grantees
- Evaluate inter-agency collaborations on RFAs, strategic planning, grantee advisory boards
- Encourage reciprocal activities from relevant Agency partners

Areas for Action

DATA DISSEMINATION

- Develop an approach to data repositories
- Data repositories should incorporate multiple levels of access, and diverse tools for synthesizing data and generating reports.
- Repositories should incorporate considerations of intellectual property, copyright, IACUC/IRB, confidentiality and other issues.
- Diverse potential users should be given the opportunity for input early in the process of designing and building the database infrastructure.

Areas for Action

TRANSLATION

- Effective translation should be the ultimate goal for SBRP-funded research.
- Proposals should, at a minimum, identify potential translational outcomes, discuss appropriate timelines (which may vary for different types of research), and identify partners who may be needed to effect translation
- Greater emphasis should be placed on improvement of public health as an outcome

Areas for Action

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Recognize the importance of building, maintaining and improving relationships with communities who are directly impacted by Superfund sites and the expectations within those communities.
- Effective outreach and development of respectful partnerships should be broadly targeted, to include community members, medical providers, advocacy organizations, and decision-makers/community leaders.
- Consider EAP suggestions for specific ways to improve community outreach

Final Thoughts

- The EAP was very pleased with the support and cooperation of the SBRP staff and the Institute's contractor, MDB, Inc., in this effort.
- The EAP appreciated the forthright input it received from grantees, partner agency personnel, business representatives and stakeholders.
- The EAP believes that if actions are taken to implement recommendations in this report the SBRP (now SRP) will continue to fill an important niche in the science needs for site assessment and remediation, and will have a positive impact on public health.