

## The Role of the BIO AC

The Advisory Committee for Biological Sciences (BIO AC) charter describes the objectives and duties of the committee in very general terms:

***Objective and Scope of Activities:*** *To provide advice and recommendations to the National Science Foundation concerning support for research, education and human resources in the biological sciences.*

***Description of Duties:*** *Review and advise on the impact of research support programs in the disciplines and fields encompassed by the Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO)*

*Advise BIO on program management, overall program balance, and other aspects of program performance*

*Advise as to the impact of overall NSF-wide policies on the BIO scientific community.*

The BIO AC is advisory to the Directorate over a wide range of matters as determined by the Assistant Director for Biological Sciences, who is the Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the BIO AC.

The Directorate often seeks advice from the BIO AC, or sub-committees thereof as authorized by the BIO AD, about the following matters:

Anticipated or emerging areas of research in the biological sciences, including but not limited to areas of “high-risk” research, inter- or trans- disciplinary research, and trends in fundamental research supported by the “core” programs in BIO

Strategic planning for research, education and infrastructure support by BIO for the non-medical biological sciences

Strategic human resource development in undergraduate and graduate biology education, and inclusion of members of underrepresented groups in STEM professions relevant to biology

Development of metrics to determine the outcomes and impacts of the aforementioned activities

Strategic communication with academic communities, professional societies, and NGOs that engage in or support biological research and education

The BIO AC participates in each Division’s Committee of Visitor (COV) “assessment of NSF’s performance in the integrity and efficiency of the **processes** related to proposal review” through a designated representative to the COV, who subsequently presents the COV report to the BIO AC for approval. A written response to each COV report is prepared by the BIO AD or his/her authorized representative and transmitted to the BIO AC and to NSF senior management. Each COV is considered a sub-committee of the BIO AC; its external members are approved and appointed by the BIO AD in his/her capacity as the DFO for the BIO AC.

The BIO AC has no oversight or approval authority, and cannot participate by statute and NSF policy in:

Development of the NSF or BIO annual budget request (except in terms of offering general advice about existing or potential BIO initiatives or programs prior to development of a budget request). The content of each budget request to Congress is confidential and embargoed until publically released by the Office of the President of the United States.

Matters pertaining to the hiring or management of NSF or BIO personnel (although the BIO AC may suggest names of individuals for consideration by BIO as potential candidates for current or expected vacancies in the senior management positions). In BIO, a Division Director is typically a temporary position (IPA appointment) and a Deputy Division Director is a permanent (SES) position.

Pre-decisional matters pertaining to Biology Directorate awards, or to the development and implementation of internal policies or procedures for the management of proposals (solicited or unsolicited) submitted to the Biology Directorate for merit review and potential funding. The Biology Directorate may from time to time seek advice from the BIO AC on the impact and effectiveness of such policies and procedures following their implementation.

Matters pertaining to the management of the Biology Directorate within the NSF including its interactions with other NSF Directorates, federal agencies, and non-federal or international organizations (unless advice is specifically requested by the Biology Directorate or the NSF).

#### BIO AC Meetings

The BIO AD (or his/her designated representative) develops the BIO AC meeting agenda in consultation with the BIO AC Chair, in order to provide advice to the NSF on current issues in a timely manner.

The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, requires that the BIO AC meetings be open to the public, and requires that a designated NSF official be present for any official meeting of the BIO AC. Closed meetings of the BIO AC or any sub-committee thereof cannot be held in the absence of a designated NSF official.