

NATIONAL  
SCIENCE  
ADVISORY  
BOARD FOR  
BIOSECURITY



# Working Group on Communication of Dual Use Research Results, Methods, and Technologies





# Working Group Roster

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## Voting Members:

- P. Keim (Chair)
- A. Casadevall
- L. Enquist
- D. Franz
- J. Gordon
- S. Ehrlich
- S. Lemon
- A. Sorensen
- T. Shenk

## Federal Agency Representatives:

- B. Cuccherini (VA)
- D. Dixon (NIH)
- T. Lomax (NASA)
- B. Lushniak (FDA)
- S. Nightingale (HHS)
- S. Steele (DoJ)
- M. Schmolesky (State)
- R. Walters (Intel.)



# NSABB Charge

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- **The NSABB Charter states that the NSABB is to “advise on national policies governing publication, public communication, and dissemination of dual use research methodologies and results.”**



# Working Group Charge

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- **Develop guidance and tools to:**
  - **Facilitate consistent and well-considered decisions about communication of information with biosecurity implications**
  - **Demonstrate to the public that scientists recognize, and are being responsive to, concerns about the security implications of their work**



# Communication Tools

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- **Principles for the responsible communication of research with dual use potential**
- **Points to consider (i.e. a framework) for identifying and assessing risks and benefits of communicating research information with dual use potential, including options for the communication of such research**
- **Considerations for the development of a communication plan for research with dual use potential**



# Communication Tools

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- **Possible uses:**

- **Review**

- Research proposals
    - Manuscripts
    - Presentations (oral, abstract, posters)
    - Internet postings

- **Education tool**

- Raise awareness of DUR issues within the scientific community
    - Ethics training




# Communication Tools

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- **Possible users:**

- **Investigators and research supervisors**
- **Students, postdocs and others involved in the research**
- **Institutional biosecurity review entity**
- **Proposal reviewers**
- **Funding agencies/institutions**
- **Government policy makers**
- **Journal editors, reviewers and publishers**



# Outreach to Stakeholders

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- **Outreach to peers by Working Group members**
- **Panel Discussion with IBC community, scientists, security policy experts**
- **Roundtable with editors of scientific journals, including international community**





# Feedback: Communication Tools

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- Liked idea of having tools to formalize or systematize review process
- Liked idea of using tools in ethics training courses



# Feedback: Communication of Dual Use Research

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- Agreed with emphasizing the importance of how information is presented
- Stressed value of scientists working to enhance public understanding of their research
- Suggested strategies for engaging the general media (e.g. Science Media Center in the UK)



# Feedback: Assessment Framework

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- Concern that every manuscript submitted for publication would be subject to assessment for dual use potential
- Format of a questionnaire to be completed invoked 'regulatory burden' fears
- Framework should be shorter, not a form to be filled out, but rather 'Points to Consider'
  - PToC format would be useful as a hyperlink for submitting authors and for manuscript reviewers and editors conducting biosecurity reviews



# Feedback: DUR as an International Issue

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- Dual use research issues not a high a priority in Europe and Asia. Higher priority are public health and infectious diseases
- Frame issues more broadly in terms of well being to mankind rather than US national security concern
- UK has a mechanism for editors to ensure authors have alerted public health authorities in particular circumstances when a publication may cause public concern (e.g. vaccine adverse reactions)



# Communication Tools

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# Principles for Responsible Communication

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- Principles that underpin the responsible communication of dual use research findings
  - Communication is vital for scientific progress
  - Communicate research to the fullest extent possible
  - Need for balance
  - Need to assess risks and benefits of communicating information
  - Consider a range of communication options
  - Communication occurs throughout the research process
  - Need to consider what is communicated, and the way in which it is communicated



# Principles for Responsible Communication

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- **Added:**

- **Public trust is essential to the vitality of the life science research enterprise.**

**It has always been important for life scientists to participate in activities that enhance public understanding of their research.**

**Because of the potential for public misunderstanding of, and concerns about dual use research, it is especially important that life scientists engage in outreach on a regular basis to raise awareness of the importance of the research and to reassure the public that the research is being conducted and communicated responsibly.**



# Communication Tools

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# **Points to Consider (Assessment Framework)**

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- **Re-formatted questionnaire into a points to consider document – users can tailor and format for their specific purpose(s)**
- **Key features:**
  - **General Overview of Information**
  - **Risk Analysis**
  - **Benefit Analysis**
  - **Risk vs. Benefit Assessment**
  - **Formulation of Recommendation Regarding Communication**



## Points to Consider (Assessment Framework)

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- **Formulation of Recommendation Regarding Communication**
  - **Decisions about how to responsibly communicate research with dual use potential should address **content**, **timing** and **extent of distribution** of the information**



# Points to Consider (Assessment Framework)

<b>Content</b>	Communicate as is
	Addition of contextual Information
	Modify or remove substantive information
<b>Timing</b>	Communicate immediately
	Delay communication
<b>Distribution</b>	No limit on distribution
	Limit distribution on a 'need to know basis'
	Don't communicate

## ■ Added footnote:

- The relevance and/or feasibility of considering limits on the distribution of dual use research will depend on the specific situation.

E.g., while limiting distribution is not a consideration for most scientific journals, it might be a reasonable consideration early on in a research project that yielded information of special significance to public health or national security.



# Communication Tools

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# Communication Plan

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- **Critical part of decision to communicate**
  - **Not only what is said, but how it is said**
  - **Promotes public understanding and trust**



# Ongoing Tasks

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- **Statement regarding the importance of communicating findings from life sciences research**



# Oversight Framework Considerations

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- **When and how should dual use research communications be reviewed?**
  - **Identify key points along the research continuum**
  - **Determine necessary expertise for reviewers**
  - **Consider oversight strategies for research not initially identified as dual use**



# Recommendation to the NSABB

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- **The Communications Working Group requests the NSABB consider approving these work products as components of an oversight framework for addressing dual use research of concern**