

**Office of Justice Programs  
Science Advisory Board Meeting**

**June 22, 2011**

**Meeting Minutes**

## **Contents**

<b>SAB Subcommittee Progress Reports (January to June 2011)</b> .....	<b>2</b>
National Institute of Justice .....	2
Evidence Translation and Integration .....	3
Bureau of Justice Statistics .....	3
Quality and Protection of Science .....	5
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention .....	6
<b>SAB Operational Issues</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Laurie Robinson’s Remarks on the SAB Mission and Priorities</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Discussion of Topics Identified by the Subcommittees</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Key Principles .....	9
The Science Agenda and the Programmatic Issue .....	9
Peer Reviews .....	9
Ad Hoc Issues .....	9
<b>Next Steps</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Appendix A Meeting Agenda</b>	
<b>Appendix B List of Attendees</b>	
<b>Appendix C Science Advisory Board Subcommittees</b>	
<b>Appendix D List of Handouts and Other Supporting Materials</b>	

# **Office of Justice Programs Science Advisory Board Meeting June 22, 2011**

## **Meeting Minutes**

The Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Science Advisory Board (SAB) convened its second meeting on June 22, 2011, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Virginia. The 18-member SAB provides advice in the area of science and statistics for the purpose of enhancing the impact and performance of OJP programs and activities in criminal and juvenile justice.

The purpose of the meeting was to update the Board on the activities of the newly-formed Subcommittees, continue discussion of Board operations and activities in the past 6 months, and look at SAB strategy and approaches moving forward.

Assistant Attorney General (AAG) Laurie O. Robinson was present throughout the day to listen to the science advisors and provide comments on the mission and direction of the SAB. In addition to reporting Subcommittee progress, the Board discussed communication strategies in relation to OJP components and OJP as a whole, the formation of additional Subcommittees, and new directions for focusing Board efforts.

Dr. Alfred Blumstein, SAB Chair, opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. A total of 45 individuals were in attendance altogether, including the Assistant Attorney General, Laurie O. Robinson, the Designated Federal Officer, Marlene Beckman, 12 Board members, 1 new Subcommittee member, and 21 federal observers. Nine members of the public attended as observers and did not provide any written or oral comments.

### **Subcommittee Progress Reports (January to June 2011)**

The focus of this meeting was to update the Board members and OJP on the meetings and activities of the Subcommittees. In the past six months the Board created five Subcommittees:

- National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Subcommittee
- Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Subcommittee
- Quality and Protection of Science Subcommittee
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Subcommittee
- Evidence Translation and Integration Subcommittee

The Subcommittees provided updates on conference calls with OJP components, science-related issues and challenges, and plans for assisting OJP with its science agenda.

## National Institute of Justice Subcommittee

Dr. Joan Petersilia, Co-Chair, reported that the NIJ Subcommittee has had several conversations with Dr. John Laub, the Director of NIJ, to explore further how the SAB can be of assistance. Dr. Laub suggested that the Subcommittee focus on how the “hard science” side of NIJ might be better coordinated with the “social science” side. Since the initial SAB meeting in January 2011, three new members were appointed to the Subcommittee by the AAG:

- Dr. Tom Mitchell, Professor, Computer Science, Carnegie Mellon University
- Dr. George Whitesides, Professor, Chemistry Department, Harvard University
- Dr. Eric Buel, Director, Vermont Forensic Laboratory, University of Vermont

Following their exchanges with Dr. Laub, the Subcommittee discussed focusing its initial work on the following issues:

- Pre-solicitation decisions regarding choice of topics to research. NIJ has recently conducted three focus groups of leading scholars who were asked to identify priority topics and methodology for future research. Dr. Laub shared the draft report on community crime and will send the other two reports to the Subcommittee for feedback when the reports become available.
- Peer review process. The Subcommittee will review NIJ’s draft proposal for establishing standing peer review panels. This topic is the immediate focus of the NIJ Subcommittee.
- Post-award monitoring. The Subcommittee will address this issue and weigh in on it in the next six months (e.g., do the grant deliverables appropriately match up with the research design?).

Now that NIJ’s response to the National Research Council report has become available, the Subcommittee will review the document and address the gaps and areas of potential improvement.

NIJ requested that the SAB assist in identifying other models in federal government agencies which may be helpful in assessing the effectiveness of agencies like NIJ. The SAB will also consider whether NIJ is receiving the right level of funding given its mandate and potential. The Subcommittee will weigh in on this issue of funding levels and priorities at a later time.

Overall, the Subcommittee expressed a need for more direction about what OJP wants the Board overall and Subcommittees specifically to do to be most helpful.

## **Evidence Translation and Integration**

Dr. Tony Fabelo, Chair, reported that his Subcommittee held several conference calls, as well as had conversations with the directors of NIJ and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). The Subcommittee has reviewed the current OJP plans for evidence translation under the Evidence Integration Initiative (E2I), the capacity in OJP to sustain the effort over time, and OJP's dissemination and peer review strategies.

Based on its review of OJP processes in the past six months, the Subcommittee identified challenges in the following areas where the SAB and this Subcommittee can be of assistance:

- The internal review process. Protocols and membership for the “evidence translation team” have not been formalized. Coordination with NIJ's “translational criminology” initiative is not well defined.
- The new CrimeSolutions.gov Web site. The Subcommittee is concerned that there is not an adequate mechanism in place to ensure that the timeliness of information is monitored and updated. One task of the Subcommittee would be to review the methodology early and improve it as it goes on.
- Diagnostic Center. The solicitation for this initiative has not been released. The Subcommittee was not clear how the Diagnostic Center will develop in practice. For example, how can the technical assistance personnel merge science knowledge with practical experience?
- Allocation of resources. Spending resources on a Diagnostic Center without spending resources for supporting the internal “evidence translation” process is an issue of concern for the Subcommittee.

In regard to CrimeSolutions.gov, Phelan Wyrick, Senior Advisor, the Office of the Assistant Attorney General (OAAG), pointed out that the review and evaluation methods and materials are on the Web site and can be resources for SAB consideration of research evaluation issues.

Board members asked about the policy implications of the ratings posted on CrimeSolutions.gov— whether OJP cuts off funding to those who show no effects. AAG Robinson responded that there is no policy that OJP will fund programs that do work or not fund programs that do not work. The ratings (effective/promising/no effects) have no funding implications for OJP.

In regard to the proposed Diagnostic Center, AAG Robinson further noted that Congress has not yet approved budget appropriations for this initiative, but OJP would appreciate advice from the Evidence Translation and Integration Subcommittee about how to craft this center and also link it to other training and technical assistance programs.

Dr. Fabelo listed the following next steps the Subcommittee plans to take:

- Assist OJP with E2I in formalizing the internal review process, developing a more cohesive interagency plan, determining OJP program-driven initiatives that may generate practitioner-oriented knowledge that needs ~~translation~~,” and improving the new Web site.
- Coordinate with other Subcommittee work to review other federal science agencies’ translation efforts for ~~lessons learned~~.”
- Advise on setting up a practitioner focus group to develop ~~practice peer review~~” panels. This will help to integrate the perspective of the practitioner into the process.

### **Bureau of Justice Statistics**

Dr. Colin Loftin, on behalf of Chair Dr. Rick Rosenfeld, presented the progress report of the BJS Subcommittee. Since January 2011, the BJS Subcommittee members held two phone conversations, one organizational and the other with Dr. Lynch, Director of BJS. They identified the following issues:

- Revision of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The Subcommittee may have some advisory role in this effort.
- BJS and Census Bureau relocation of the NCVS. The Subcommittee members are well informed on survey methods and could advise here.
- Expanded use of administrative records. Administrative records may be used for generating estimates of crimes known to police, sampling based on police records, etc. Although there is no funding yet for this, the Subcommittee’s affirmation of the importance of this effort may encourage funding.
- Expanded opportunities for young faculty involvement in BJS data analysis. The Subcommittee felt that expansion of existing professional development efforts would be positive for BJS and for diversity of students.
- Funding contingencies. The Subcommittee could give thought to how to protect the science in the event of severe budget cuts.
- Nominating procedures for directors of federal agencies. Senate Bill 679 alters the nominating procedures and would have a direct impact on BJS and NIJ. The Subcommittee plans to address this issue and develop an action plan.

Dr. Lynch noted that this last point is an issue of independence that goes to the heart of the two scientific agencies within the Justice Department and is an appropriate topic for the Science Advisory Board to address.

Some Board members expressed concern that getting into the politics of it all could sidetrack the efforts of the SAB. The Board did not reach consensus about moving forward on this issue.

### **Quality and Protection of Science**

On behalf of Chair Dr. Rob Sampson, Dr. Alan Leshner and Dr. Jocelyn Pollock presented the Quality and Protection of Science Subcommittee report. The purpose of this Subcommittee is to ensure that mechanisms are in place to support and protect science at the various agencies in the Office of Justice Programs. Subcommittee members met via several conference calls with the NIJ Subcommittee Chair, SAB Chair, and the Director of NIJ, Dr. John Laub. Topics included:

- Peer review process. Discussions included the role of researchers vis-a-vis practitioners, the selection of reviewers, and methods for identifying solicitations. The Subcommittee decided that peer review is an issue best addressed by the NIJ Subcommittee.
- Quality and research background of director/staff of science-related bureaus. The Subcommittee's concern is to see procedures in place for maintaining consistency across presidential appointments in scientific quality.
- How to maintain policies and a culture that support the integrity of the science. The Subcommittee noted the importance of aligning OJP procedures to the norms of longstanding science agencies. Maintaining the visibility of this issue of scientific integrity is one area where this Subcommittee believes it can make a difference.
- OJP's response to the Holdren Memorandum. This document outlines OJP plans for maintaining scientific integrity in four areas: foundations of scientific integrity in government, public communications, use of federal advisory committees, and professional development of government scientists and engineers. The Subcommittee is reviewing the documents.

The Quality of Science Subcommittee members expressed the belief that its efforts are best focused on recommending or highlighting *principles* and *mechanisms* that embed the integrity of science in the policies and culture of the Department of Justice.

Dr. Pollock has begun to draft a set of principles and themes that cut across agencies— independence, the director's fixed terms, peer review, and creation of solicitations. Alan Leshner further suggested that the SAB look at what kind of strategy might be employed to inculcate the culture of science into the infrastructure in a way that it could survive a change in Administration.

Going forward, the Subcommittee plans to develop a response/analysis of the OJP response to the Holdren memorandum; continue collaboration with the NIJ Subcommittee, especially regarding peer review; and further develop the principles and mechanisms idea for discussion with the full Board.

### **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**

Dr. Ed Mulvey, on behalf of Chair Dr. Mark Lipsey, updated the Board on the activities of the OJJDP Subcommittee. Following several conference calls amongst themselves and with Jeff Slowikowski, OJJDP's Acting Administrator, the OJJDP Subcommittee identified several relevant themes to address:

- Priorities for OJJDP discretionary research and evaluation activities. This issue includes the process for selecting projects.
- Quality of the research evidence reflected in OJJDP training, technical assistance, and service programs. There is a concern about the large numbers of contractors doing work for OJJDP and the validity of some of the information being provided to practitioners.
- The evidence base for OJJDP policy recommendations. Committee members expressed the need for a better understanding of how OJJDP sets priorities and handles science.

The OJJDP Subcommittee is planning to select and review a few OJJDP programs and activities for which research is especially relevant. Programs under consideration are Mentoring, Internet Crimes Against Children, Safe Start, Children's Advocacy Center, Tribal Youth Program, Juvenile Drug Courts, Field Initiated Research and Evaluation Program, the OJJDP Model Programs Guide, and the new journal and web initiatives for disseminating research findings.

Dr. Mulvey announced that Brecht Donoghue will be moving to OJJDP in early July and serve as liaison for the OJJDP Subcommittee.

Dr. Fabelo acknowledged the challenges of OJJDP and the other OJP programmatic agencies to come up with performance measures for the programs they fund. He encouraged the Subcommittee to look at performance measures for operating agencies – the science to develop measures and the political constraints to provide simple, quick indicators of how the program is having an impact. Dr. Blumstein asked the Board to continue to explore the interaction between the science agencies and the operating agencies.

Jeff Slowikowski, OJJDP's Acting Administrator, described OJJDP as a microcosm of OJP in that OJJDP has both the science and the program elements. In FY 2010, OJJDP funded about \$24 million in research, data collection, and evaluations out of a budget of



approximately \$500 million. Much of the work is driven by appropriations, and, without a true discretionary budget, OJJDP does not have the ability to select research topics that are outside its specific funding categories.

Mr. Slowikowski proposed a four-hour session at the OJJDP National Conference in October, with Brecht Donoghue as coordinator, to brief members of the Subcommittee on OJJDP operations, funding streams, priorities, and the flow from DOJ to OJP to OJJDP.

## **SAB Operational Issues**

Board members raised a number of operational issues to address as the SAB moves forward in its advisory role.

**Do the Subcommittees report to the individual agencies or to OJP?** AAG Robinson provided further clarification on the role of the SAB in relation to OJP and its agencies. The charter for the SAB states that the Board reports to the AAG. The intention is that the Board is representing science and the integrity of the science, not just for this Administration but for future Administrations over the long term. The SAB can be a sounding board for the head of OJP as well as the heads of its scientific and programmatic agencies.

**What are the resources for carrying out this structure?** Considering that the Board members are all volunteers with limited time and resources, additional staff may be needed to support the work of the Board. With the current budget cuts, AAG Robinson cannot assign staff at this time. When an issue arises that is very important to OJP, and if the Board has or can identify appropriate expertise, then resources may have to be assigned.

**What is the procedure for providing advice?** Marlene Beckman, the Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the SAB, explained that the Subcommittees report to the Board and the Board gives the advice to the agency.

**Selection of topics for SAB consideration.** Who sets the agenda? Do OJP and its individual agencies issue the questions for the Board to address or does the Board pose the questions to OJP? After much discussion, the consensus was that the process move in both directions for maximum flexibility. The agencies may pose their questions to the SAB, and each Subcommittee may identify one or two things that are important to work on and if the Board agrees, then the Subcommittee moves forward. Board members felt it is important for the Subcommittees to pose questions and bring them to the full Board for discussion and decision making about next steps.

**Formation of new Subcommittees.** The Science Advisory Board charter allows for the formation of additional Subcommittees. As OJP identifies new topics to address, the Board will reorganize and mobilize new Subcommittees on those issues.

## **Laurie Robinson’s Remarks on the SAB Mission and Priorities**

Laurie Robinson thanked the Board members for their efforts and acknowledged the need to prioritize the SAB agenda. She placed priority on the following:

1. Supporting E2I and CrimeSolutions.gov, as well as the Diagnostic Center—connecting science with practitioners.
2. Connecting the science functions within OJP with the programmatic functions—infusing what we are learning in science into what we are funding and where we are providing training and technical assistance in the field and reviewing what is going on in the field to ensure that it is consistent (or at least not in conflict) with the science.
3. Protecting science and the integrity of science. This was the major thrust behind the creation of the OJP Science Advisory Board.

Overall, she emphasized that it is important to educate people about the culture of science within the Justice Department. In the long term, this Science Advisory Board may be seen as a resource to OJP staff, to the Administration, to science organizations, and to Capitol Hill.

AAG Robinson asked the SAB to consider holding a panel or round table about its sense of the state of science every year at the NIJ conference or in another setting. The SAB would have an annual presence with more public interchange with the broader field, which includes practitioners and scientists.

## **Discussion of Topics Identified by the Subcommittees**

Dr. Blumstein opened the meeting to further discussion about the protection of science and other issues raised earlier in the day. The Board members exchanged ideas about principles, the science agenda and the programmatic issue, performance measures, peer reviews, and ad hoc issues.

### **Key Principles**

Dr. Pollock described the set of principles that are being drafted for review by the Board. They are independence, objectivity, and quality.

- Independence. Independence is essential to the integrity of science. A director does not have independence if he is subject to be terminated if he comes out with science that is unpopular. Other aspects of that independence involve the identification of research questions. It is difficult for a science agency to be independent if it is at the beck and call of politicians who dictate the agenda. A multiyear science agenda is more free of the demands of the existing Administration

- Objectivity. Science must not be a handmaiden of politics. This is why the agenda should come not only from OJP but also from the Science Advisory Board. The questions and activities of the SAB need to be independent of OJP in order to give OJP an objective point of view and retain the ability to ask the harder questions and say things that are not politically popular.
- Quality. This relates to the peer reviews, creation of the solicitations, and the transparency issue.

The draft of this set of principles will be further developed by the Quality and Protection of Science Subcommittee and then circulated to the full Board for consideration.

### **The Science Agenda and the Programmatic Issue**

Board members were in agreement that the existing Subcommittees are well positioned to address two of the three priorities that AAG Robinson identified. The one that requires greater focus is connecting the science agenda to the programmatic agencies—OJJDP, BJA, and OVC. The Science Advisory Board can be helpful in identifying gaps and needs and in highlighting inconsistencies.

One possibility that arose in the discussions was to form Subcommittees on BJA and OVC, giving them the same level of review and assistance by reviewing their solicitations or RFPs and programmatic activities from a science perspective. The Board members could then say what science should be behind it and whether or not it is, where they seem to be ignoring the science that is out there and especially where it contradicts science. Questions could be brought to the Board for advice on how the operating agency might make stronger use of existing knowledge, or for particularly important issues, stimulate the development of more applicable knowledge.

### **Peer Reviews**

The new NIJ standing peer review panels could benefit from input from the Science Advisory Board as this initiative is rolled out and becomes operational. The NIJ Subcommittee can observe the ongoing review process, funding decision process, etc.

### **Ad Hoc Issues**

Marlene Beckman posed a question to the Board about a process for handling ad hoc issues as they come up. She gave the example of a program whose mandated goals were unrealistic and scientifically ungrounded.

Board members responded that there are going to be some issues that are timely and urgent but they must be cautious in addressing issues that arise on an ad hoc basis.

### **Next Steps**

Dr. Blumstein asked each of the Subcommittee chairs to identify, within the next month, the issues they will be taking on and where they want to go with them in the next six

months. The executive committee will meet and discuss overlaps and then contact the different agencies and see how the SAB might be useful in their own agencies. Members also will consider how the Subcommittees may be restructured to work with some of the programmatic agencies that need more science.

The Board members shared some final thoughts about where they are now in their own planning processes:

- The NIJ Subcommittee will look at how the science and technology are interacting with the social sciences as opposed to looking at how science is used. They plan to respond to the peer review document that invokes the perspective of NIH standing peer review panels. On the strategic level, to connect the science function with practice, they may also look at NIJ and BJA in terms of science. They are available to assist NIJ in developing the pilot peer review program so that NIJ can benefit from that study for future work.
- The Evidence Translation and Integration Subcommittee will advise OJP on the CrimeSolutions.gov Web site—clearly a science-based, evidence-based initiative. The Subcommittee is available to advise when there are new science driven initiatives that are about to be undertaken in NIJ or OJP. They also plan to take an initial look at how BJA and the other programmatic agencies are struggling with performance measures and define the challenges they are facing.
- The BJS Subcommittee plans to take a look at revisions of the Crime Victimization Survey and administrative records for BJS. Having a panel by the SAB at the NIJ conference, especially if there is a publication associated with it, is a good idea.
- The Quality and Protection of Science Subcommittee will be working on the principles document, possibly adding a section on strategies, and will then distribute a draft to all SAB members before the next meeting.
- The OJJDP Subcommittee will explore the connection of science to program functions in relation to juvenile justice. There is the need to think strategically with coalitions, Congress, practitioners— building the constituency for a science advisory resource.
- One other issue that came up was the question of the methodology of the E2I program. While the E2I process was being pursued by the Evidence Translation subcommittee, there was some concern about the methodology of the evaluation and ranking process, opening the possibility of a brief review in parallel with the Evidence Translation review that might offer some methodological suggestions for strengthening the evaluation process.

Laurie Robinson thanked everyone for their contributions. She announced her plans to invite Associate Attorney General Thomas Perrelli and/or Deputy Attorney General James Cole to the next Science Advisory Board meeting in January 2012. It will be an

opportunity for robust discussion of the issues and posing some questions about how they view the role of the Science Advisory Board.

The next SAB meeting will be held in Washington, DC on January 19-20, 2012.

Alfred Blumstein adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.