

**NOAA Research Council
Social Science Committee
Terms of Reference**

1. Purpose

The Social Science Committee (SSC) of the NOAA Research Council (RC) shall be an advisory body to strengthen, coordinate and integrate the agency's social science research and analysis capabilities. The SSC shall enable the RC to fulfill both elements of its mission:

- **Ensure all NOAA services are based on sound science.** Social science research, like all NOAA research, exists to support NOAA services. Wherever possible, the RC should encourage programmatic decisions based upon sound social science research and analysis.
- **Ensure all NOAA research programs and long term plans are consistent with the NOAA Mission, NOAA Strategic Plan, and recommendations of the Science Advisory Board (SAB) and the National Research Council.** The NOAA Mission is "to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources *to meet our nation's economic, social, and environmental needs.*" The NOAA Strategic Plan affirms that "*a strong economic and social science capability is needed to analyze and understand user requirements, priorities, and benefits of services and products.*" The SAB has found that "NOAA's capacity to meet its mandates and mission is diminished by the *under-representation and under-utilization of social science.*"

2. Responsibilities

The SSC shall have the following responsibilities in support of the RC:

- **Identify** corporate priorities for social science research that will support NOAA's Mission.
- **Advise** the Research Council on opportunities to expand the social science component of NOAA's research activities.
- **Coordinate** the corporate execution of priority social science research by linking networks of social science expertise to each other, the programs, and to NOAA leadership.
- **Evaluate** corporate planning in terms of the scale, scope and consistency of social science research. This would include evaluations of Goal Team social science strategic plans (as recommended by the Physical and Social Science Task Team), the Annual Guidance Memorandum, Goal Team Guidance to Programs, Strategic and Corporate Portfolio Analyses, Program Operating Plans and Program Plans, as well as revisions to the NOAA 5-Year Research Plan, 20-Year Research Vision, Strategic Plan, and Strategic Human Capital Management Plan.
- **Assist** the Research Council on other matters of social science, including liaising with the SAB.

3. Membership

The Chair of the SSC shall be appointed by the Research Council Chair. The committee shall consist of a voting representative from each NOAA Line Office and each Goal Team (including Mission Support). **Voting members shall be full or part time federal employees** appointed by the Chair of the Research Council based on recommendations from the Line Office Assistant Administrators or Goal Team Leads. Voting members shall represent the interests of his or her Line Office or Goal Team. Non-voting participation is welcome, encouraged and open to all others working on social science topics at NOAA. In particular, Staff Offices such as Education and Outreach, Workforce Management, Legislative Affairs, and Public Affairs, and PA&E have unique and important roles to play with respect to social science at NOAA.

4. Decision Making Process

The SSC shall collect and analyze information in carrying out its responsibilities. Recommendations shall be presented to NOAA Research Council for review and approval. The Chair shall strive for consensus on every issue, but when consensus cannot be achieved, the Chair will decide which recommendations to present to NOAA Research Council for review and approval. While this does not preclude the presentation of alternatives, the SSC will make recommendations to NOAA Research Council.

5. Administrative Provisions

The SSC shall report to the NOAA Research Council. It shall hold regular meetings at least 6 times a year on the second Wednesday of the month or at the call of the Chair. It shall take action on social science topics recommended by its members and others. Social science topics shall be assigned to a committee member or his or her designee(s) for action.

6. Subcommittees

The SSC may form (and terminate) ad hoc subcommittees as required to achieve specific tasks. Such subcommittees may include persons who are not members of the SSC, but the Committee will seek to include a member on all subcommittees. Subcommittees will use a decision making process similar to that used by the SSC, except the subcommittee will prepare its recommendations for review by the SSC. After its review and concurrence, the SSC will present its recommendations to NOAA Research Council for review and approval.