



CHARTER
of the
INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP ON SCIENTIFIC COLLECTIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIFE SCIENCES
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE
NATIONAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

A. Official Designation

The Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections (IWGSC) is hereby reestablished by action of the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) Committee on Science (CoS), Life Sciences Subcommittee (LSSC).

B. Purpose and Scope

The IWGSC will address the scientific, environmental, societal, and national security needs for Federal scientific collections,¹ by providing broad guidance related to the implementation of the recommendations in the 2010 memorandum by John Holdren to the heads of executive departments and agencies on Policy on Scientific Collections[†] and to fulfill the requirements of Section 104 of the *America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010*.[‡]

C. Functions

The functions of the IWGSC are to:

1. Develop and recommend policies to the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) for the management and use of Federal scientific collections to improve the quality, organization, access (including online access), and long-term preservation of such collections for the benefit of the scientific enterprise. In developing those recommendations the IWGSC shall consult, as appropriate, with Federal agencies with such collections and, as permitted by law, with representatives of other organizations, institutions, and other entities not a part of the Federal Government that have a stake in the preservation, maintenance, and accessibility of such collections, including State and local government agencies, institutions of higher education, museums, and other entities engaged in the acquisition, holding, management, or use of scientific collections.

¹ For the purposes of the IWGSC, the term “scientific collection” means a set of physical specimens, living or inanimate, created for the purpose of supporting science and serving as a long-term research asset, rather than for their market value as collectibles or their historical, artistic, or cultural significance, and, as appropriate and feasible, the associated specimen data and materials.

In making its recommendations, the IWGSC should consider provisions for the disposal of collections when deemed appropriate; review of the research value of the collection prior to its disposal; consult with researchers who have used the collection, and other potentially interested parties, concerning the collection's value for research purposes; additional educational uses for the collection; and transfer of scientific collections when no longer need to researchers at institutions or other entities qualified to manage the collections.

2. In consultation with relevant Federal agencies, recommend to the OSTP Director a common set of methodologies to be used by Federal agencies for the assessment and projection of costs associated with the management and preservation of their scientific collections.
3. In consultation with relevant Federal agencies, provide advice to the OSTP Director as to the development of an online clearinghouse for information on the contents of, and access to, Federal scientific collections.

D. Membership

The following NSTC departments and agencies are represented on the IWGSC:

Department of Agriculture (Co-chair);
Department of Commerce;
Department of Energy;
Department of Defense;
Department of State;
Department of Health and Human Services;
Department of Homeland Security;
Department of the Interior;
Department of Transportation;
Department of Veterans Affairs;
National Aeronautics and Space Administration;
National Science Foundation; and
Smithsonian Institution (Co-chair).

The following organizations in the Executive Office of the President shall also be represented on the IWGSC:

Office of Management and Budget, and
Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Cooperating departments and agencies shall include other such Executive organizations, departments, and agencies as the Co-chairs may, from time to time, designate.

E. Private-Sector Interface

The IWGSC may seek advice from members of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology and will recommend to the Director of the Office of Science and Technology

Policy the nature of additional private-sector² advice needed to accomplish its mission. The IWGSC may also interact with and receive *ad hoc* advice from various private-sector groups as consistent with the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

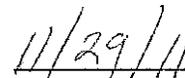
F. Termination Date

This charter shall terminate no later than March 31, 2013, unless renewed by the Co-chairs of the LSSC.

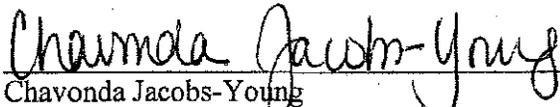
G. Determination

I hereby determine that the reestablishment of the Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections is in the public interest in connection with the performance of duties imposed on the Executive Branch by law, and that such duties can best be performed through the advice and counsel of such a group.

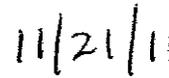
Approved:



Date



Chavonda Jacobs-Young
Co-chair of Subcommittee on Life Sciences, and
Acting Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture
Department of Agriculture



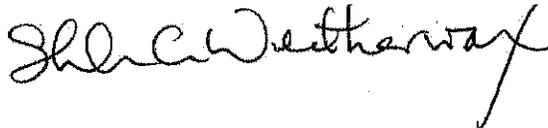
Date

² The Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. App., as amended, does not explicitly define "private sector," but the phrase is generally understood to include individuals or entities outside the Federal government such as, but not limited to, the following: non Federal sources, academia, State, local or Tribal governments, individual citizens, the public, non-governmental organizations, industry associations, international bodies, etc.



Joann Roskoski
Co-chair of Subcommittee on Life Sciences, and
Executive Officer for Biological Sciences
National Science Foundation

11/22/11
Date



Sharlene Weatherwax
Co-chair of Subcommittee on Life Sciences, and
Associate Director of Science for Biological and Environmental Research
Office of Science
Department of Energy

November 7, 2011
Date

†

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 6, 2010

MEMORANDUM TO THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM: John P. Holdren, Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, and
Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy

SUBJECT: Policy on Scientific Collections

Background: Scientific collections are widely recognized as a vital part of the common infrastructure for science in the United States and globally. In 2005, the Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections (IWGSC)—part of the National Science and Technology Council—began to assess agency needs for collections and related policy issues. As part of that effort, the IWGSC performed the first cross-agency survey of government collection holdings, which provided important insights into the nature of these resources and how collections are being housed, staffed, and cared for.

In 2009, the IWGSC released its report, "*Scientific Collections: Mission-critical Infrastructure for Federal Science Agencies*," which highlighted the many ways collections contribute to improving health, enhancing national security, protecting commerce and trade, studying climate and ecosystems, and understanding our environment. As noted in the science and technology priorities memorandum for the FY 2012 budget, it is important to begin coordinated implementation of that report's recommendations.

Policy: The IWGSC report made several recommendations about how the Federal government should manage, document, fund, share, and report on scientific collections. This memo provides deadlines by which agencies should implement the following three recommendations.

- i. Budgeting for Collections: While some agencies budget directly for collections care and maintenance, much of the money spent on collections is appropriated within research or other activities. Agencies should ensure that their collections' necessary costs are properly assessed and realistically projected in agency budgets, so that collections are not compromised. This should be implemented within 12 months of this policy issuance.
- ii. Developing best practices: Proper policies and procedures for maintaining and preserving scientific collections are central to their value. The report noted wide variation in the collections policies across agencies. Agencies are urged to share their scientific collections policies and procedures to help agencies develop best practices. This should be implemented within 12 months of this policy issuance.
- iii. Making collections more accessible: The President has established the Open Government Initiative to better deliver information to the American people. Making collections accessible on the internet improves public access. Within the scope of their missions, agencies should work together to document their holdings and make as much collections information as possible available on-line where it can be useful to the public and the research community. This should be implemented within 36 months of this policy issuance.

Thank you for your continued attention to the important issue of scientific collections.

‡ Relevant language from the America COMPETES Act (Pub. L. No. 111-358):

SEC. 104. FEDERAL SCIENTIFIC COLLECTIONS.

(a) **MANAGEMENT OF SCIENTIFIC COLLECTIONS.**—The Office of Science and Technology Policy shall develop policies for the management and use of Federal scientific collections to improve the quality, organization, access, including online access, and long-term preservation of such collections for the benefit of the scientific enterprise. In developing those policies the Office of Science and Technology Policy shall consult, as appropriate, with—

(1) Federal agencies with such collections; and

(2) representatives of other organizations, institutions, and other entities not a part of the Federal Government that have a stake in the preservation, maintenance, and accessibility of such collections, including State and local government agencies, institutions of higher education, museums, and other entities engaged in the acquisition, holding, management, or use of scientific collections.

(b) **CLEARINGHOUSE.**—The Office of Science and Technology Policy, in consultation with relevant Federal agencies, shall ensure the development of an online clearinghouse for information on the contents of and access to Federal scientific collections.

(c) **DISPOSAL OF COLLECTIONS.**—The policies developed under subsection (a) shall—

(1) require that, before disposing of a scientific collection, a Federal agency shall—

(A) conduct a review of the research value of the collection; and

(B) consult with researchers who have used the collection, and other potentially interested parties, concerning—

(i) the collection’s value for research purposes; and

(ii) possible additional educational uses for the collection; and

(2) include procedures for Federal agencies to transfer scientific collections they no longer need to researchers at institutions or other entities qualified to manage the collections.

(d) **COST PROJECTIONS.**—The Office of Science and Technology Policy, in consultation with relevant Federal agencies, shall develop a common set of methodologies to be used by Federal agencies for the assessment and projection of costs associated with the management and preservation of their scientific collections.

(e) **SCIENTIFIC COLLECTION DEFINED.**—In this section, the term “scientific collection” means a set of physical specimens, living or inanimate, created for the purpose of supporting science and serving as a long-term research asset, rather than for their market value as collectibles or their historical, artistic, or cultural significance, and, as appropriate and feasible, the associated specimen data and materials.