

United States Environmental Protection Agency Forum on Environmental Measurements Charter

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Forum on Environmental Measurements (FEM or Forum) is established by the Agency's Science and Technology Policy Council (STPC) to promote consistency and consensus within the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA or the Agency) on measurement, monitoring, and laboratory science issues. To fulfill this purpose, the FEM makes recommendations to STPC on basic principles to guide the Agency's measurement community in: validating and disseminating methods for sample collection and for biological, chemical, radiological and toxicological analysis; developing measurements that are scientifically rigorous, statistically sound and representative; employing quality systems approaches that ensure that the data gathered and used by the Agency are of known and documented quality; and promoting development and use of innovative technologies to generate, transmit, compile, and utilize monitoring data and information to aid decision making. The FEM also provides EPA and the public with a central point for addressing measurement methodology issues with multi-program impact.

Issues and activities to be addressed by the FEM are expected to include, but not be limited to:

1. Providing a central point to address Agency-wide measurement issues, such as:
 - a. evaluation of new and existing measurement methods and policies;
 - b. application of methods to specific situations;
 - c. approaches to evaluating monitoring data;
 - d. determination of appropriate metadata needed to support data evaluation;
 - e. employment of the performance approach when specifying monitoring requirements; and
 - f. enhancing both internal and external communications, and coordination on measurement science activities.
2. Establishing an Intranet and Internet portal for access to the work of the FEM and Agency information on environmental measurements.
3. Promoting coordination in addressing measurement science issues across the Agency, including linkages with external consensus groups.
4. Recommending guidelines for:
 - a. measurement method development, validation, application, and interpretation;
 - b. peer review for measurement methods; and
 - c. training and technical support for monitoring programs.
5. Promoting the identification and consideration of the use of technical standards (e.g., analytical methods) from voluntary consensus standards bodies in order to meet the requirements of the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995.
6. Promoting innovative sensor and monitoring technologies in all media.

Although the Forum will serve as a means of developing Agency policies that provide consistent, yet flexible, tools with regard to measurement science issues to support environmental decision-making, the FEM is neither a part of, nor does it replace or supplement, existing Agency regulatory development processes or directives clearance process. The FEM will support and enhance existing activities by Agency Program and Regional Offices.

MEMBERSHIP

Representatives

The FEM will include a representative from each of the Agency's Program Offices, Office of Research and Development, and Regional Offices. Offices may appoint representatives as they determine appropriate; however, it is highly desirable that FEM representatives be senior-level managers (i.e., Division Director equivalent or higher) knowledgeable of measurement issues and with the authority to implement FEM policies in their organization.

FEM representatives provide advice on the overall direction of the FEM activities; convey the perspectives of their Offices; and act as champions for FEM initiatives in their Offices. They should also maintain regular communication with the STPC representatives for their respective Offices. FEM representatives will be expected to identify and, with concurrence from appropriate managers, obligate staff resources to participate on FEM Action Teams.

Members

FEM members are EPA personnel identified and tasked by FEM representatives to participate on Action Teams. These individuals also make valuable contributions outside of specified Action Team participation through their insights on topics being considered by the representatives to the FEM.

ORGANIZATION

Reporting/Authority

The FEM is established by the STPC and amendments to the Charter must be submitted by the FEM to the STPC for approval. The FEM reports to the STPC. All products (e.g., guidance, policy, tools) or recommendations should receive acceptance by the STPC. All policies, guidance, and tools developed must be consistent with the Agency's statutory obligations and should be consistent with the EPA Information Quality Guidelines.

Officer(s)

The Chair (or Co-Chairs) for the FEM are appointed by the Science Advisor in his/her role as Chair of the STPC. The FEM Chair (or Co-Chairs) will serve as liaison(s) to the STPC.

Staff

The FEM staff will consist of an appointed technical lead (i.e., an Executive Director) and other technical/general staff all in the Office of the Science Advisor (OSA). The Executive Director will work under the direction of the Chair (Co-Chairs) and function as the Chief Operating Officer of the FEM to manage assigned resources (i.e., other technical staff and funds) to assure that technical, logistical, and operational needs are met.

Action Teams

Action Teams are formed by the FEM to address specific issues, tasks, and short- or long-term projects. The terms and duties of Action Team members will vary for each project. FEM staff will coordinate the Action Team's activities. Action Teams may be disbanded by the Forum when their

assigned objectives are accomplished or for other appropriate reasons, such as merging of two teams.

The FEM representatives will provide oversight and approval of the Charge and Action Plans for each Action Team. Action Teams should submit their Action Plan to the FEM representatives for approval no later than the meeting subsequent to their formation. Action Teams will report to the Forum during the quarterly meetings. Policies, guidance, and/or tools developed by Action Teams will be submitted to the Forum for review and approval. Once approved by the Forum, final products will be presented to the STPC for approval to use by the Agency.

On occasion and consistent with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), Action Teams may solicit independent advice from the external scientific community on specific method issues by convening activities, such as workshops, seminars, or other open discussions.

OPERATIONS

Meetings

The FEM should meet at least four times annually. These can be virtual meetings with a face-to-face opportunity, when practical. The length should be kept to 1 ½ hours unless FEM representatives agree to make an exception due to a pressing agenda. All FEM representatives are expected to participate in Forum meetings. On the occasion when a representative cannot attend, the representative will authorize a substitute to speak on his/her behalf. All other FEM members are encouraged to attend Forum meetings.

Annual Action Agenda

During the fourth meeting each year (i.e., typically in October), an Action Agenda will be reviewed to reflect on the year's accomplishments and focus tasks for the year ahead. The FEM Executive Director will be responsible for developing an Action Agenda that conforms to the purpose and scope outlined in this Charter and is based on accomplishments and direction from the FEM representatives.

Assessments

Every five years, the Forum will assess its work by identifying successes, failures, and lessons learned. The Forum should use this information to identify strategic goals and actions for the next five years in addition to Charter revisions, if necessary. All findings, future plans, and any Charter revisions should be summarized in a short report and submitted to the STPC for review and approval. Once approved, goals and actions should be integrated into the Action Agenda's areas of focus and the revised Charter should be followed.