

**Basic Energy Sciences (BES) Response to the Report of the Basic Energy Sciences Advisory Committee
Committee of Visitors (COV) Review of the BES Materials Sciences and Engineering (MSE) Division**

Dates of COV: October 23 – 26, 2023

Date of Response: January 22, 2024

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	COV Recommendations	BES Responses
1	In light of rising personnel and other research costs and potential flat or nearly flat budgets, maintain portfolio excellence by balancing the number and size of awards.	To ensure portfolio excellence and impact, BES-MSE will continue to consider a variety of factors when making award decisions, including the tradeoffs between the total number and size of awards.
2	The demographic and institutional statistics of all submissions (including pre-proposals) to all programs, as well as awards, should be collected, beyond awarded PI demographics. This should be done in accordance with current and future government directives and in consultation with experts on appropriate wording for each category. This is not an MSE-specific recommendation but should be considered by BES/DOE.	BES will work with the Office of Science to enhance systems to further broaden collection of demographic and institutional data to ensure these are sufficiently complete to inform decisions and assess outcomes of BES-MSE research awards.
3	Workloads of MSE program managers should continue to be assessed to be sure that the appropriate level of staffing support is being provided and that the number of invited full proposals (all submissions, including Topical and targeted FOAs) is optimal to ensure a highly inclusive and world leading portfolio.	BES-MSE will continue to periodically assess workloads across the division and, within constraints, adjust staffing and solicitations to manage workload while also ensuring an inclusive and impactful portfolio.
4	Attention should be paid to career development of PMs, in order to assure the continued recruiting and retaining of PMs with excellent expertise and commitment. They should be provided sufficient travel budget and opportunity to visit PIs and attend conferences including international meetings to stay engaged with state-of-the-art science and to be able to assess the international competitiveness and leadership of DOE programs.	Within the available travel budget, BES-MSE will encourage PMs to visit PIs and attend domestic and international conferences to stay engaged with the researchers and enhance awareness of forefront science in the disciplines covered by the programs.
5	Reviewer instructions should explicitly include a request that reviewers identify and assess <i>strengths and weaknesses</i> in all review criteria specified for a given solicitation (including Scientific Merit of the Project, Appropriateness of the Approach, Competency of Applicant, and Reasonableness of the Budget). This will provide additional valuable information to the PMs and will reduce the impact of inevitable reviewer bias.	For BES FOAs, reviewer instructions in PAMS will be updated to encourage reviewers to identify strengths/weaknesses for review criteria, in support of their assessment of the proposal.

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6	MSE program managers should be commended for their attention to a holistic thoughtful review process. To the extent possible, MSE (and more broadly BES and DOE) should instruct reviewers to focus on assessing likely scientific importance and proposal strengths and weaknesses beyond simple metrics such as publication venue (impact factor) and number of papers published.	For BES FOAs, reviewers will be encouraged to provide a holistic assessment of proposals.
7	MSE should highlight the role and responsibility of BES for National Laboratory stewardship, including setting programmatic directions with intention to produce great science, laboratory workforce development, and maintenance of scientific expertise in instructions to future COVs.	For future COVs, MSE will provide a more extensive discussion of the stewardship responsibilities that BES has for DOE Office of Science National Labs and the broader goals for programs at other DOE National Labs.