



Department of Energy
Office of Science
Washington, DC 20585

April 15, 2004

Dr. Joel Parriott
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
New Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Joel:

The Office of Nuclear Physics (NP) Committee of Visitors (COV) visited Germantown headquarters on December 11-12, 2003, and their report transmitted by the Nuclear Science Advisory Committee (NSAC) can be found on the NP web-page <http://www.sc.doe.gov/production/henp/np/nsac/nsac.html>. As can be seen from the Report, the Committee examined the processes and actions of the Office in handling grant proposals, project oversight, and monitoring of laboratory research and operations and developed a number of recommendations. We find the recommendations to be helpful. Our responses to these recommendations are indicated below. Two of them (Nos. 1 & 4) require resources from within the Office of Science whose implementation cannot be guaranteed by our Office.

1. "The COV strongly recommends that an additional 20% in travel funds be allocated to ensure these [site] visits continue." (pg. 2)
Implementation will depend on increased program direction funds being made available for travel.
2. "[T]he COV suggests the implementation of an annual deadline for new proposals." (pg. 2)
We believe that this recommendation has merit and the Office has set October 15 as the deadline date for submission of new proposals. Its announcement will be made at the Spring American Physical Society meeting in early May and on the NP website.
3. "[The COV] suggests that greater flexibility between the needs of the various parts of the program might better be ensured by having a greater fraction of these [reserve] funds handled by the Associate Director's office." (pg. 2)
There is also merit in this recommendation and the Office will work during the FY 2006 budget process to identify uncommitted reserves held by the Associate Director to be increased to provide this flexibility to handle emerging opportunities and emergencies.



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4. "The COV further suggests that the program managers generate a comprehensive database of reviewers that included more members of the international community." (pg. 3)

The Office of Nuclear Physics is working with the Office of Science to develop a reporting system that can track use of reviewers by the Office. Efforts will be made to expand the reviewers to include more international experts with a goal of ~10% of the reviewer base be international experts.

5. "[I]t does recommend that the ONP include a formal conflict of interest statement in the letter of request sent to reviewers." (pg. 3)

A one-sentence statement will be included in instructions sent to reviewers.

6. "The committee recommends that a uniform reporting format for continuation progress reports be implemented. The essential information should be in a mandatory format allowing ease of access to this." (pg. 3)

The Office will send out instructions to all grantees in a "Dear Colleague" letter this spring, as well as post them on the DOE-NP web site.

7. "While these [Field Work Proposals] may be useful to the laboratories in setting budget priorities some questions were raised about the utility of the FWP's as a planning tool for the nuclear physics program managers. Further discussion between the laboratories and the ONP might find more efficient processes to meet their respective needs." (pg. 3)

Within DOE it is planned to have electronic submission of FWP's. This would allow an earlier receipt of them by the Office which would improve their usefulness for the budget preparation. Already this year some of the FWP's from the laboratories were made available on the labs' websites for use by the Office in its budget preparation process.

8. "The COV also suggests that [a] formal workforce development assessment be included in the Science and Technology reviews of the major laboratories." (pg. 3)

The charge to the committee of experts for the Science and Technology reviews will include a statement for them to assess workforce development.

We trust that you will find that we have made an appropriate response to each of these recommendations. I would be pleased to address any concerns you may have regarding this matter.

Sincerely,



Dennis Kovar

Associate Director of the Office of Science
for Nuclear Physics