

**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**

Date of COV: April 18 – 20, 2018

Date of Response: August 8, 2018

Program Points of Contact: Harriet Kung (BES) and Linda Horton (BES-MSE)

	<b>COV General Recommendation/Finding</b>	<b>BES Response</b>
1	It is highly recommended that the program managers are provided expanded travel funds to attend national and international meetings/conferences to stay informed about the field and conduct site visits. This should include participation in smaller, focused workshops which are often highly informative. The lack of travel funds inhibits direct access by the program managers to rapidly evolving domestic and international research	BES agrees that travel is crucial for the management of BES grants and laboratory programs and for the program staff to maintain awareness of the technical directions in their fields. Following discussions of draft COV report, the Office of Science (SC) provided additional travel funding to BES for FY 2018 that will support foreign travel, additional university site visits, and conference participation.
2	The COV recommends addition of staff to MSE. First, replacement of personnel that have left is needed. Second, current staffing levels provide little to no opportunity to train personnel in anticipation of retirements or departures. The program managers play critical roles in the stewardship of the research portfolio and the need for additional talented staff is emphasized.	Following the COV, BES received approval to fill the open team lead position and will continue to work with SC leadership in addressing the program staffing needs.
3	Consider implementing the flexibility to hold COVs less frequently than every 3 years. The decisions regarding timing would be made in conjunction with the relevant constituencies such as the division, DOE leadership and BESAC.	BES recognizes the value of this recommendation and will work with the Office of Science in evaluating the frequency of COVs.
4	The COV recommends implementing the option to extend the term of awards. Consider ideas such as 4-5 years for large multi-PI awards or 3+2 awards based on the program needs, success, and program manager discretion.	BES is currently using 4-year awards for Computational Materials and Chemical Science, SciDAC, and EFRC awards. In addition, BES will continue to more flexible arrangements, beyond the standard 3-year funding term, for other larger and multi-PI (e.g., > \$1.5M) awards.
5	The Early Career Research Program has clearly been a big success in attracting top new talent and should definitely be continued. Based on the low acceptance rate, it is perceived that the early career program may be accepting too many full proposal submissions. Consider methods to reduce the number of full proposals submitted.	BES agrees with this recommendation and is working with Office of Science to implement a more flexible preliminary application review process. The concept is to use a comparative technical review as the basis to reduce the total number of full proposals that would be reviewed. The preliminary application reviews would be the foundation for communications between the program managers and PIs to help improve future proposals.

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6	Continue and expand communication pathways of programmatic emphasis areas and those deemphasized. This is particularly important for EPSCoR, academic early career and first time PIs.	BES appreciates the need to provide clear communication to the research community on the evolution of supported research directions. We will continue proactive management of information posted on the website and presentation of research priorities at technical meetings and other forums. Further, we will evaluate the option of “webinars” for EPSCoR community outreach and will continue to provide video-teleconference presentations to the academic community upon request, to complement in person visits.
7	The COV recognizes that metrics for research are needed and it is understood that multiple considerations are currently employed. The COV expresses caution about the perception of using publication in ‘high impact factor’ journals as a metric of program success.	BES agrees with the caution expressed in this recommendation and the recognition that this is not currently an issue for assessments by the MSE division. BES will continue to use broad-based expert assessments for evaluation of applications for new and renewing awards.