



CHARTER of the
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FORENSIC SCIENCE
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE
NATIONAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL

A. Official Designation

The Subcommittee on Forensic Science (SoFS) is hereby re-established by action of the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), Committee on Science (CoS).

B. Purpose and Scope

Forensic science is a critical tool in criminal justice and other domains, helping to identify suspects; convict criminals; exonerate the wrongly suspected, charged, or convicted; and identify victims of natural or man-made disasters. It is essential that information generated by forensic science meet a scientific standard deserving of public trust.

In February 2009, the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies issued a report, *Strengthening Forensic Science in the United States: A Path Forward* ("NRC report"), which concluded that the scientific practices underlying many forensic disciplines fall short of this standard in a number of respects. The NRC report made recommendations on how to improve the scientific foundations of forensic science. And in July 2009 the NSTC established a Subcommittee on Forensic Science "to assess the practical challenges of implementing those recommendations and advise the White House on how best to achieve the goals outlined in the NRC report." As of the spring of 2012, that mission has largely been completed through the creation of a number of draft reports, each focused on a specific NRC report recommendation and approved by the SoFS membership.

The SoFS is hereby tasked with new responsibilities to further its previous charge of recommending ways to best achieve the NRC report's goals. Specifically, the SoFS is tasked to compile the aforementioned work products that have gained approval by the SoFS, in order to create a White Paper that summarizes the SoFS's recommended path forward for achieving the NRC report's goals.

Separately, the SoFS is hereby encouraged to create a prioritized forensic science research agenda through a comprehensive gap analysis or other appropriate means, to inform ongoing Administration efforts to maximize the impact of its investments in forensic science research.

This charter also authorizes the SoFS to, at its discretion; develop on an expedited basis a stand-alone report addressing one of the focus areas of the White Paper: the challenge of developing common data standards that would facilitate the sharing of fingerprint data among law enforcement agencies at the local, state, Federal, and even international levels. In doing so, the SoFS should ensure that its work is complementary and not in conflict with other Federal efforts to address Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) interoperability issues, including

the National Institute of Justice-funded AFIS Interoperability Working Group administered by the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

C. Functions

This re-establishing of the SoFS will serve the critical functions of supporting ongoing interagency forensics coordination and continuing to address the interests of Federal, State, local, and tribal forensics officials and practitioners, whose participation in the SoFS may continue and whose role in the implementation activities the SoFS recommends will be crucial to the achievement of the NRC report's goals. Specifically, the SoFS shall perform the following functions:

1. Develop a White Paper summarizing the SoFS's recommendation to achieve the goals of the NRC report.
2. Create a prioritized national forensic science research agenda.
3. Draft a detailed strategy for developing and implementing common interoperability standards to facilitate the appropriate sharing of fingerprint data across technologies.

D. Membership

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

Department of Commerce (Co-chair);
Department of Defense;
Department of Energy;
Department of Homeland Security;
Department of the Interior;
Department of Justice (Co-chair);
Department of Labor;
Department of State;
Department of the Treasury;
Environmental Protection Agency;
Intelligence Community;
National Science Foundation;
National Transportation Safety Board (*ex-officio*);
Smithsonian Institution; and
United States Postal Service (*ex-officio*).

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

Domestic Policy Council;
Office of Management and Budget;
Office of Science and Technology Policy;
National Security Council; and
White House Counsel.

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

local, and tribal governments may be represented on the SoFS as *ex-officio* members under the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act exemption to the Federal Advisory Committee Act.*

E. Private-Sector Interface

The SoFS may work with the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology to secure appropriate private-sector[†] advice and will recommend to the CoS and/or the Director of OSTP the nature of additional private-sector advice needed to accomplish its mission. The SoFS 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

Unless renewed by the Co-chairs of the CoS prior to its expiration, the SoFS shall terminate no later than September 30, 2012.

G. Determination

I hereby determine that the operation of the Subcommittee on Forensic Science is in the public interest in connection with the performance of duties imposed on the Executive Branch by law and that such duties can be best performed through the advice and counsel of such a group.

Approved:



Francis Collins
Co-chair of the CoS, and
Director, National Institutes of Health

3/30/2012

Date



Subra Suresh
Co-chair of the CoS, and
Director, National Science Foundation

3/29/2012

Date

* 2 U.S.C. § 1534(b).

[†] 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.

Carl E. Wieman

Carl Wieman
Co-chair of the CoS, and
Associate Director for Science
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President

3/27/12

Date