

THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES

Advisers to the Nation on Science, Engineering, and Medicine

COMMITTEE ON AMERICA'S CLIMATE CHOICES

Statement of Task

The Committee on America's Climate Choices ("the committee") will be responsible for providing overall direction, coordination, and integration of the America's Climate Choices suite of activities and ensuring that these activities provide well-supported, action-oriented, and useful answers to the eight key questions outlined below. The committee will be composed of approximately 22 members including leading scientists, engineers, science and energy policy experts, business leaders, current and former officials from different levels of government, representatives from leading nongovernmental organizations, and other important stakeholders and decision makers, all of the highest possible stature and with appropriate breadth and depth of knowledge. The chairs and vice-chairs from each of the study panels will be asked to serve on the committee to foster communication and enhance coordination throughout the study.

The committee will first engage in two simultaneous tasks. The first task is to organize the America's Climate Choices Summit, tentatively scheduled for March 30-31, 2009 (with each panel holding a meeting on the following day, April 1, 2009). The committee will design the Summit, invite speakers and other participants, and ensure that the Summit serves to motivate, inform, and bound the work of the study. The second committee task will be to review the goals and plans for the study, making refinements and adjustments as needed, and provide guidance to the study panels. This guidance should include, at a minimum, a common analytical framework for all groups, a definition of terms (e.g., short-term versus long-term), and a set of "scenarios and assumptions" that describe future climate forcing (i.e., greenhouse gas emissions), climate change vulnerabilities and impacts, and future technological, demographic, and economic changes. The committee may convene a working group of committee and panel members to develop these scenarios and assumptions, which could be revised as needed as the study progresses. The guidance given to the panels should also recognize the dynamic nature of the climate change problem and encourage the panels to study options that are flexible and responsive to changing conditions.

After the Summit, the committee will continue meeting to monitor the progress of the panels, facilitate interaction and coordination among the groups, begin its final report, and provide guidance on outreach and dissemination plans. The committee will be encouraged to establish working groups on important cross-cutting themes, actions, or questions (e.g., engaging with the international community) to facilitate integration and ensure that the output of the study is relevant to a broad range of audiences. The committee will also convene workshops or joint meetings as need to address key cross-cutting issues, provide additional information-gathering opportunities, and/or facilitate coordination and collaboration among the panels.

The ultimate task of the committee will be to use the panel reports and other information to write a final report that answers the final four key questions to be addressed by the study:

5. What short-term actions can be taken to respond effectively to climate change?
6. What promising long-term strategies, investments, and opportunities could be pursued to respond to climate change?
7. What are the major scientific and technological advances (e.g., new observations, improved models, research priorities, etc.) needed to better understand and respond effectively to climate change?
8. What are the major impediments (e.g., practical, institutional, economic, ethical, intergenerational, etc.) to responding effectively to climate change, and what can be done to overcome these impediments?

The final report will provide clear, analytical, policy-relevant (but not policy-prescriptive) answers to these and other important questions. The costs, benefits, limitations, tradeoffs, and uncertainties associated with different options and strategies will be described qualitatively and, to the extent practicable, quantitatively based on the detailed analysis provided in the panel reports and other sources. The report should be authoritative yet concise and useful to decision makers, and should provide targeted, action-oriented advice on what can be done to respond most effectively to climate change at different levels (e.g., local, state, regional, national, and in collaboration with the international community) and in different sectors (e.g., nongovernmental organizations, the business community, the research and academic communities, individuals and households, etc.).

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