

THE FOCUSED SSAB:

KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES FROM THE FERNALD EXPERIENCE

OCTOBER 1994



John Applegate
Kenneth Morgan
Douglas Sarno

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Why A Site-Specific Advisory Board Was Established At Fernald	1
1.2 The Fernald SSAB As A Model	2
2. FERNALD'S APPROACH	5
2.1 Investment	5
2.2 Return	7
3. THE FOCUSED SSAB	9
3.1 Identify the Need	9
3.2 Establish the Role	10
3.3 Convene	12
4. COMPONENTS	14
5. COOPERATION	15
5.1 Teamwork	15
5.2 Membership	16
5.3 Public Involvement	17
5.4 National Outreach	18
6. LEADERSHIP	19
6.1 The Chair	19
6.2 DOE	21
7. COMMITMENT	22
7.1 DOE	22
7.2 Regulators	23
7.3 Letters of Commitment	23
8. GOALS	24
8.1 Mission	24
8.2 Short and Long-Term Objectives	25
9. SUPPORT	26
9.1 Staff	26
9.2 Information	28
10. PROCEDURES	31



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 WHY A SITE SPECIFIC ADVISORY BOARD WAS ESTABLISHED AT FERNALD

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) facility at Fernald, Ohio is located approximately 17 miles northwest of downtown Cincinnati. Surrounding properties consist primarily of agricultural and residential development. The facility was established in 1951 as the Feed Materials Production Center to produce uranium metals for weapons production. The facility operated in this capacity until 1989 and the end of the Cold War when its mission was changed to environmental restoration. It is now referred to as the Fernald Environmental Management Project. Production and disposal activities, wind, and runoff during its 38 years of operation have resulted in widespread contamination from uranium and other hazardous and radioactive chemicals both on and off the 1,050 acre site. The DOE is now actively engaged in seeking solutions to these contamination problems. Of significant concern is uranium contamination of soils and water on site and above background levels up to five miles from the facility. The entire site is situated above a sole source drinking water aquifer. Off-site drinking water wells in the area have been contaminated.

Though small in size by DOE standards, Fernald has established a large national reputation, including being featured on the cover of *Time* magazine, and little of it has been good news. In the early 1980s, it was discovered that the Fernald facility had been contaminating local drinking water for many years. The Department was sued by local residents and paid out significant damages for this contamination. A strong grassroots citizen group was established (Fernald Residents for Environmental Safety and Health, FRESH) and trust of the Department and its contractors was nonexistent. In the early 1990s, a revised Consent Agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency identified that a number of important and far-reaching decisions about the cleanup of the facility were to be made over a several year period. DOE managers at Fernald recognized that many of these decisions would have a profound impact on the long-term interests of local stakeholders and that stakeholder involvement was therefore essential to developing sound decisions.

It was against this backdrop that Fernald sought to establish a citizen task force to assist in the most pressing issues facing the cleanup of the facility. About the same time, a model of citizen participation was emerging from the Federal Facilities Environmental Restoration Dialogue Committee and described in its February 1993 Interim Report (often referred to as the Keystone Report). The report recommended creating site specific advisory boards (SSABs) to assist in the decision-making process. Fernald decided that a SSAB would be useful at the facility, as an additional component of its existing and extensive public participation program. It was determined that a SSAB should be established at Fernald to focus on the key overall issues facing site cleanup.

The SSAB at Fernald was convened by an independent convener during the summer of 1993 and was formally established in August 1993 as the Fernald Citizens Task Force. The convener also identified a chair for the Task Force and developed a draft charter with the DOE, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, and local stakeholders. The charter focused on four specific and far-reaching issues: future use, cleanup levels, waste disposition, and cleanup priorities for the Fernald site. In its first months, the Fernald Citizens Task Force established its direction under the leadership of its Chair and consultant and established a general strategy for approaching these issues. By January 1994, the Fernald Citizens Task Force had hired staff and developed a detailed work plan to conduct its decision-making over an 18-month period to coincide with the Amended Consent Agreement for the site. Once initial recommendations are in place, the Task Force will continue to work with DOE to ensure that activities are conducted in sync with the values of the community. As of the autumn of 1994, the Fernald Citizens Task Force had identified acceptable risk and cleanup levels for the site and was well on its way to developing specific recommendations for future use of the Fernald site.

1.2 THE FERNALD SSAB AS A MODEL

This report presents the approach used at Fernald to establish and run a focused SSAB, identify immediate, pressing key issues that are to be faced, and resolve these issues. The success of Fernald in establishing a strong and functioning SSAB serves as a useful model for other DOE facilities. However, the Fernald model is just one of many approaches that can be taken to SSABs. In reading this report, it is important to keep in mind that the most important aspect of any SSAB is that it works for the issues and stakeholders that are present at each particular site. The approach presented here has worked extremely well for Fernald.

The Fernald Citizens Task Force has successfully begun to deal with the many difficult issues identified as part of its mission. SSABs that are in the earlier stages of formation may be able to use the approaches developed at Fernald

to avoid some of the pitfalls common to early stages of these groups. The experiences at Fernald are applicable to SSABs throughout the DOE complex, as Fernald is facing many of the same issues and challenges that will be faced at all sites. Some of the key site characteristics that have helped to mold and focus the Fernald Citizens Task Force include:

**An Active,
Vocal, and
Skeptical Public**

Public involvement in cleanup activities at Fernald is sophisticated and long-standing. The Fernald Citizens Task Force has had to deal with enormous mistrust of DOE and while it is currently in the process of overcoming that mistrust, some problems do remain and are being pursued by all involved in order to work effectively on the overall problems that beset the site.

**Large Volumes
of Waste**

Returning Fernald to background conditions would require the disposal of tens of millions of cubic yards of radioactive soils and materials. Task Force recommendations must take into account all of the complex issues of on-site versus off-site disposal, acceptable land uses, acceptable risks and cleanup levels, and the efficacy of available treatment and disposal technologies.

**Immediate
Impacts
On Stakeholders**

The Fernald site is 1,050 acres in size, making all of its waste an immediate concern to its neighbors. Storage silos containing the most hazardous wastes at Fernald are only 1,000 feet from the site boundary and literally right across the street and visible from surrounding homes and farms. The accessibility of the Fernald property makes existing health threats very real to the community and complicates options for locating disposal facilities outside of the public's view and reach.

**Greater
Need for
Stakeholder
Access**

Like all of DOE, Fernald has gone through a metamorphosis with regard to public access and input to its activities over a relatively short period of time. It was not long ago that many of the activities at Fernald were secret. Public access was prohibited and little was known by neighbors about site activities. As the Cold War ended, the need for public participation became apparent and warranted information was released in enormous volumes as public comment was solicited on cleanup decisions in accordance with federal law. Stakeholders at Fernald still felt like victims in a "decide-announce-defend" system, only now having to deal with information overload as well. Today, Fernald managers recognize the need to develop a decision-making process that provides for the *bona fide* involvement of all stakeholders to make credible and implementable decisions that will stand up over time.

**Budget
Constraints**

Not long ago, it seemed that the environmental budget for DOE would provide the funds needed to achieve desired levels of cleanup throughout the complex. Efforts at deficit reduction and cost controls now make this a difficult challenge. Budget considerations could have significant impacts on the level of cleanup that will be achievable as well as the length of time needed to achieve results.

These and other important issues have made it clear to cleanup decision-makers that the future of Fernald cannot be developed without the close integration of the needs of local citizens and governments. The only credible response is to develop the cooperative approach to decision-making that is now being borne out by the Fernald Citizens Task Force. The Fernald Citizens Task Force has become the focal point for considering the big picture issues that are paramount to achieving a mutually acceptable solution to waste management at Fernald. Within the Fernald Citizens Task Force the issues of trust and credibility will be put to their ultimate test to put into place the overall positive community relationship that is necessary for cleanup to work. Success will depend on how the Task Force responds to its role in the process and how effectively Fernald incorporates the Task Force process into decision-making and Task Force and overall stakeholder recommendations into final decisions.



2. FERNALD'S APPROACH

The first step in establishing the Task Force at Fernald was to develop a broad understanding of the role of the Task Force as well as the role of DOE and its contractors in working with the Task Force. The Fernald Citizens Task Force was established to assist in making better decisions for the long-term cleanup and management of the Fernald site. One of the most important decisions was to focus the effort of the Task Force on the big picture issues that were of critical concern in the decision-making process. By creating this focus early in the process, Fernald set clear expectations about the role and input of the Task Force. As important, DOE managers understood the value that was expected of the SSAB.

It was also important to understand that only through significant long-term commitment and involvement by DOE and its contractors can the Task Force achieve its goals and ultimately provide useful input to site decisions. In this way, Fernald views the Task Force as a fundamental investment in the future of the Fernald site. A great deal must be given up front in good faith by DOE before any return on investment is realized and, like any investment, there is risk. Success cannot be guaranteed, but the potential for significant return is present. Moreover, the likelihood of return can be greatly improved by thorough research, preparation, and planning by DOE, members, and staff. This approach has guided the development of the Task Force at Fernald as described below.

2.1 INVESTMENT

Establishing effective SSABs will be difficult for DOE, not because these boards are difficult to establish, but because DOE must provide the very information to stakeholders that may invite challenges, difficult questions, and disagreements. While ultimate authority and responsibility for making cleanup decisions rests with DOE and its regulators, it must, at the same time, em-

power SSABs to function as contributors within the decision-making process itself. As contributors to the process, SSABs require the following:

Support	SSABs need the technical and financial support sufficient to understand and evaluate the issues within its mission.
Information	Only DOE can provide the bulk of information needed by SSABs. This information needs to be provided in a timely and unbiased manner.
Access	The SSAB process should not be parallel to, but rather part of the site decision-making process. SSABs must work directly with the information and decision-makers that are relevant within real-time decision-making.
Response	DOE needs to provide rapid response to the SSAB's information needs and questions.
Independence	The SSAB must be allowed to work independently of DOE preferences and biases.
Time	SSABs must be given sufficient time to make a meaningful contribution to decisions. In some cases, this may even require adjustment of existing decision-making timetables.

2.2 RETURN

First and foremost, an effective SSAB will result in better decisions from DOE. SSABs provide the foundation for cooperation among stakeholders that is necessary to get decisions that are fully reflective of key issues and concerns and can ultimately be accepted and implemented. The key advantages of SSABs that provide for better decisions include:

Personal Relationships

Personal relationships among stakeholders, especially between government officials and local citizens, are essential to developing the confidence and trust needed to make cooperative decisions. SSABs provide an effective vehicle for regular interaction and rapport among a wide cross-section of stakeholders.

Improved Understanding of Bigger Picture

In the compartmentalized, technologically focused Superfund decision-making process, the larger social and economic issues that drive public concerns and expectations of cleanup are rarely developed in time to affect decision-making. SSABs provide the proper forum for these issues to be discussed and evaluated in a timely manner to provide the much needed direction for site decision-making. Citizens think of the site from the outside in, seeing a much broader set of issues than the inside-out focus of technical decision-makers. By engaging stakeholders and regulators in meaningful discussions about the big picture issues facing site cleanup, SSABs can equip site decision makers in understanding the impact of big picture issues and public concerns on decision-making.

Improved Communication Through Cooperation

SSABs provide the opportunity for *bona fide* stakeholder interaction during decision-making, not after. SSABs work within and alongside the site decision-making process allowing for ongoing input to key issues before decisions are made and foster the input of public ideas into everyday decision-making. This provides the public with a real sense of involvement, increasing their understanding and acceptance of issues, and improves DOE decision-making by inputting important and relevant stakeholder concerns into the process in time to be given proper consideration. The SSAB also provides ready access to a knowledgeable group of stakeholders to act as a sounding board for important and sensitive issues.

**Knowledgeable,
Focused
Recommendations**

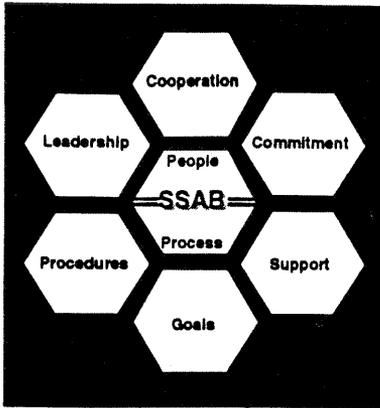
SSABs provide stakeholders the opportunity to look at issues in depth and develop knowledgeable, reasoned, and reasonable recommendations, rather than the hurried responses to DOE's proposals that are generated under current public comment guidelines. Understanding of the complexity of issues and constraints on decision-making is greatly enhanced in the SSAB process and will be reflected in the recommendations developed.

**Improved
Public
Information**

SSABs serve an informal role in disseminating information to the general public. Members of the SSAB each have some peer group or constituency which may look to them as a direct access to information. The information that is developed as part of the SSAB process is readily accessible to the public and will be more directly focused on their needs and concerns.

**A Total
Site Focus**

The diverse membership of an SSAB will ensure that all concerns and interests are weighed on each issue that it evaluates. This broader perspective is invaluable to making informed and publicly acceptable cleanup decisions.



3. THE FOCUSED SSAB

If an SSAB is to play an integral role in site decision-making, then its implementation must be carefully planned. Early expectations about the function and role of the SSAB will play a significant role in public acceptance of the SSAB and its ultimate effectiveness. As such, a great deal of planning and organizing is required of DOE before an SSAB can be established at a site. First, it is important for the site to develop a full understanding of its decision-making needs. Second, the role the SSAB will play in improving site decisions needs to be established. Third, the process for identifying the members and leadership of the SSAB needs to be identified. These steps in setting up an SSAB are discussed below.

3.1 STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE NEED

The first step in the process needs to be an identification of the specific needs for public input and coordination to decision-making and whether or not an SSAB is the best approach. The following issues should be thoroughly evaluated to ensure a common understanding of the site needs exists at the site.

Is site management ready for an SSAB?

Public input to decision-making is not merely a requirement to be checked off a manager's list, but a way to dramatically improve decisions that are made, and to assist site managers in facing difficult and complex issues. All levels of management must be willing to work directly with the SSAB and its members. If managers do not understand this and are not willing to work with and listen to the stakeholders represented by the SSAB, then it might be prudent to undertake additional internal work to prepare managers for the public process. Credibility and trust is most often lost at the working level by managers or engineers who send clear messages to the public that its input is not important, nor wanted.

What are the site's decision-making needs?

It is important to identify the issues for which an SSAB is needed. There are many issues requiring public involvement, but not all are dealt with most effectively in the context of an SSAB. If most of the big picture issues such as future use, cleanup levels, and cleanup priorities have been worked out with good public support, perhaps the need for an SSAB has passed. Working directly with the community to discuss and develop the decision-making needs, public concerns, and alternatives for public input is the most effective way to determine the best vehicles for public input to specific issues.

How effective are current public participation efforts?

Ensuring that the interests of all stakeholders are well considered, understood and represented in the decision-making process is the primary function of an effective SSAB. If this is not being done, regardless of other public affairs activities, an SSAB is needed. It is important to first assess how well existing methods provide stakeholders and stakeholder groups meaningful input to decision-making and organize the SSAB to work with these existing groups. In some cases, existing avenues for input and existing relationships and organizations may already serve the majority of the stakeholders' needs for input to decision-making.

3.2 STEP 2: ESTABLISH THE ROLE

A focused SSAB needs to be developed for the overall benefit of site cleanup. Many groups and individuals will have preconceptions about the purpose and role of the SSAB, and DOE must work closely with local stakeholders to develop a common vision of the SSAB at the specific facility.

Ultimately, the SSAB will fairly represent the effected communities concerns. Although SSABs became popular as a result of recommendations of the Federal Facilities Environmental Restoration Dialogue Committee, sites should not feel required to follow the specific recommendations of the Dialogue Committee. An SSAB is an organization of stakeholders that is established to assist in the cleanup decision-making at a site. The membership, organization, management, and mission of the SSAB do not need to follow any specific rules except to be effective for the needs of the site and responsive to the concerns of the stakeholders. The words "site-specific" should be taken literally and provide the level of flexibility required to establish an effective working body for the benefit of the site.

Guidelines for Setting the SSAB Role

SSABs, if used effectively, can be a very positive aspect of the site decision-making process. The effectiveness of an SSAB is ultimately tied to its ability to work within a clearly defined and accepted role in the cleanup process. An SSAB focused on improving site decisions should consider the following guidelines in establishing its role:

A Focused SSAB Requires a Clear Mission

A focused SSAB differs from other public participation activities in that it has a specific mission. The mission works to define the objectives of the SSAB and focus the SSAB on a series of purposeful activities.

A Focused SSAB Is Not Simply An Oversight Board

A focused SSAB will play a proactive role in site decisions, and must avoid being another forum for reactive public participation. A good public involvement program will provide many opportunities for citizens to voice their disapproval of DOE actions and proposals. If SSABs become just another forum for disgruntlement, they are not worthwhile. It takes a real commitment from both the public and the DOE to create an SSAB that focuses on developing real and specific recommendations that will make a difference in the cleanup of the facility.

SSABs Should Focus On Big Picture Issues

The most important function an SSAB can play is to focus on the larger issues that are often lost in internal site decision-making and require significant local involvement. Future use is a prime example of where SSABs can be extraordinarily effective. Conversely, SSABs must work hard to avoid getting involved in all of the minutiae surrounding site cleanup. While enticing, small picture issues can swallow up the time and energy of SSAB members without achieving any real results. The desire to review and comment on every DOE decision document will be strong, but to do so would leave little time to focus on the overall goals of the group. It is important to use existing forms of participation effectively to help keep the SSAB focused on its agenda.

SSABs Do Not Replace Other Forms of Public Participation

A focused SSAB will have a specific agenda and will not have time to evaluate and comment on every aspect of site management and cleanup. SSABs are not elected bodies. While they can represent a full range of public concerns, they do not represent the full public. For these reasons, SSABs do not replace any specific piece of a public participation program, but enhance the effectiveness of direct public involvement in decision-making.

SSABs Must Participate in Site Decision-Making

SSABs can only be influential if they are part of the decision-making process as it unfolds, not after the fact. In the best possible scenario, SSABs will be viewed not as another public participation requirement, but as an integral component of site decision-making. SSABs need to be given access to the real decision processes if they are to work cooperatively in making the difficult site-specific decisions that require broad stakeholder understanding and acceptance. If kept outside of the decision process, SSABs will likely serve a redundant and divisive role.

SSABs Must be Site-Specific

SSABs are one of the most effective vehicles available to local interests for real and meaningful input into decision-making. As such, it is important that membership represent local interests, and issues be focused on the site and not on broader national issues except as necessary to achieve local goals. SSABs cannot be approached as cookie-cutter boards, but rather must respond to the character of the issues at each site.

SSABs Must Represent a Broad Range of Interests

SSABs are charged with making important recommendations on the big issues at sites. These recommendations will have a large impact on the future of the site and surrounding areas and must represent the concerns and interests of a broad spectrum of local interests. Membership of the SSAB should be characteristic of the demographics of the communities surrounding the site.

3.3 STEP 3: CONVENE

Once a convening process is selected, it is important that DOE accept the results of the process and not try to influence the process in any way or the resulting board will have no credibility.

The convening process at Fernald was designed to provide for an independent, credible convener who would select a broad-based membership, and identify a strong, unbiased chair. This process was selected in consultation with the stakeholder community to best balance the interests that need to be represented on the board with the need to get a board up and running in a reasonable time. Focus was placed on selecting a convener who would be able to identify balanced and representative board and avoid biasing the board toward any existing stakeholder groups. A single individual from the University of Cincinnati with no prior relationship to DOE or any stakeholder group was retained by DOE to serve as the independent convener. This worked well at Fernald because the individual was widely respected within the community and did not have any interaction with the board or site after

the convening process was complete, thus was able to avoid any potential conflicts of interest in performing her duties.

The way in which the SSAB is convened sets the tone for the overall effectiveness of the SSAB. The convening process must work within an established set of values that define the goals of the board. These values will direct the actions of the convener and establish the expectations regarding the board among prospective members and the general public. The main goal of the convening process in establishing a focused SSAB at Fernald was to create a board that represents broad stakeholder interests while at the same time has the potential to work effectively together to make the focused decisions required. The timing of decision-making activities at the site also required that a board be established as soon as possible in order to have meaningful input to decisions. As a result, direct stakeholder selection processes were avoided. The goal was not to achieve complete stakeholder consensus on every individual selected for the SSAB, but to get broad stakeholder acceptance of the process that was used to identify the specific members.

A size limit of fifteen members was established at Fernald before the convening process began. This obviously resulted in some very difficult choices. Not everyone who wishes will be afforded a spot on the SSAB, and this may result in some nay-sayers and skeptics of the SSAB. Other forms of public participation both by DOE and the SSAB itself will allow contact with and input from any individuals and groups who are not directly represented on the board. The entire process must remain open to the public and the community invited to interact with the SSAB at every opportunity.

Local representation was given top priority in convening the Fernald Citizens Task Force. Both DOE and local stakeholders agreed that the issues at stake were local, and national representation should only be included if directly requested by a local group or if a clear stake was identified which was not encompassed by local interests. Participation of local activists, governments, and businesses was stressed. The overriding purpose of the board is to obtain local, on-the-ground results and not to be another platform for national agendas.

Focus was also placed on getting a balanced representation without requiring any strict quotas for membership. The SSAB must reflect the demographics and socioeconomic conditions surrounding the facility and all stakeholder groups need to be able to broadly identify with one or more members of the board. However, it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify the exact makeup of a board in which every single individual interest or ethnic or economic group is precisely represented, and to set such expectations would undermine the ability to establish a group.



4. COMPONENTS

Merely establishing an SSAB is not in itself a necessarily useful or positive thing. A poorly conceived and implemented SSAB could result in more damage to public confidence in the process and DOE's credibility than having no board at all. Like any human construction, SSABs must be established with a

strong foundation in order to be effective. It takes both good people and good process for an SSAB to run. The Fernald model looks at all of the components of an SSAB as an integrated whole.



When all of the pieces are in place, the SSAB will be effective. If any of the pieces are weak or missing, the SSAB will be less effective. Each of these components is discussed in detail in the following chapters.



5. COOPERATION

A focused SSAB must work cooperatively to make its recommendations. An SSAB is only fully effective if it has a broad and representative membership that is actively interested in tackling the difficult issues facing cleanup at a site. It must be stressed during convening that the SSAB is a working group, not an oversight board. Active attendance by members is essential and clear attendance rules should be adopted and enforced. Board members need to be team players. In order to achieve the types of results that are expected from these boards, a great deal of compromise and empathy is required by all involved participants.

5.1 TEAMWORK

To be effective, members of a focused SSAB need to work together as a team in pursuit of common objectives. There is no meritocracy to membership on an SSAB. It is important to avoid a formal definition of "stakeholder" or to rank order the importance of individuals or groups on the board. Each member carries equal weight and for purposes of SSAB activities, should be acting as individual members of the board. Participation and membership on the SSAB must be based on the individuals who are asked to be members and not the organizations to which they belong. The SSAB will be working toward specific goals that will represent the opinion of the SSAB and will be independent of the organizations to which individual board members belong. Individual members need to feel free to work closely with the other members of the SSAB as a team in working on the difficult challenges facing the board.

Team-building activities should begin as soon as the board is established. Many of the members of the board will not have known each other previously, others will have preconceptions of each other based on background

and position in the community. These walls need to be broken down so that members can develop effective relationships among each other and as a team. Developing a mission statement, charter, and ground rules can be built into the overall team building process to save time. It is important that a common sense of purpose and cooperation be established as the board begins its work. It is useful to have a third party professional to assist in these activities.

Team building should not be viewed as a one-time event, but as an on-going activity. All of the board's interactions should be designed to allow for maximum personal contact among members. For example, it is often useful to organize meetings before or after a meal. Providing SSAB members an opportunity to break bread with each other is an excellent way to establish the personal relationships and rapport that are essential to a functional group. By including key site personnel (DOE, regulators, and contractors), these occasions can also provide an informal opportunity for access to site decision makers.

One aspect of a well-functioning SSAB is to begin to get over the "us versus them" mentality that pervades many sites from the beginning of the process of making the DOE facility a more productive aspect of the overall community. DOE, EPA, and state environmental agencies need to work actively as part of the board. The most effective aspect of any SSAB is the ability of citizens and DOE and the regulators to directly discuss important issues. Representation and active attendance by these government agencies is essential to that goal. *Ex officio* status should not be construed as an excuse for less active membership. While most groups opt for *ex officio* membership for government officials, full membership might be explored in some cases as an effective way of ensuring more productive interaction among the group and a greater level of acceptance from the agencies.

5.2 MEMBERSHIP

It should be stressed that membership in the SSAB is a privilege and a responsibility. The purpose is not to create career board members or a board of career activists seeking a vehicle for other agendas. For these reasons memberships on the Fernald SSAB are time-limited. However, in order to provide for continuity of the board, terms were staggered. While membership should reflect the diverse interests and concerns that are facing cleanup at the site, it is important to recognize that there is no perfect formulation for membership and that it is not possible to represent every individual interest. No matter how conscientious the convener was in selecting members there will always be some individual or group that feels it was dealt with unfairly. Flexibility should be built into the board's charter to add new members if serious deficiencies are recognized.

Credibility of the SSAB and its members is every bit as important as the credibility of DOE in achieving real results. Individuals that are participating as members of the SSAB must not have a conflict of interest in the alternative outcomes of the SSAB recommendations. Members must not stand to receive direct financial benefit from the activities of the SSAB. Additionally, careful consideration should be given before providing members of the SSAB any financial compensation for their participation in the SSAB. Without a doubt, participation on the SSAB is a personal sacrifice, but it is being done out of concern for the future of the community and an interest in developing or promoting good public participation policy. Receiving compensation for this work changes the entire purpose and meaning of the SSAB and may destroy the credibility of the group with the general public. By necessity, SSABs must meet outside of the work week and be flexible to ensure its members are not at a financial hardship by reimbursing actual expenses, but not by providing direct compensation. This extends also to the types of activities and travel that the SSAB members are involved in for the SSAB. The perception of too many benefits or boondoggles, such as trips to seemingly glamorous places, will also be detrimental to the ability of the SSAB to develop recommendations that are credible with the public. While certainly participation in the SSAB needs to be a rewarding experience and hardships minimized as much as possible, it is essential to balance comfort with credibility

5.3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The SSAB is not the same as a site's public participation program. It is one aspect of an effective program, in addition to its own public participation requirements. If the SSAB is to be credible, it must be a working group of individuals who bring to the table representative concerns and interests of the general public. Input from the broader public is essential to an effective SSAB. In order to do this, the members and the SSAB itself must be accessible to and in contact with the broader public.

It is important that members understand their constituencies. Though membership and voting on SSABs is individual, each member does broadly represent the interests of some sector of the general public. Sometimes these affiliations are obvious and other times they are not. Members should be encouraged to recognize and understand the communities that will most likely identify with them and work to ensure those communities are informed of and involved in board activities.

SSABs must provide for complete public access. Secrecy and closed doors were the hallmark of DOE's problems with credibility and trust. There must never be even the perception of such things with an SSAB. All meetings should be well advertised and open to the public. Both open and individual meetings should be used as needed to ensure public input and understanding.

5.4 NATIONAL OUTREACH

SSABs often have broader constituencies than within the area of the site and need to be encouraged to understand how decisions will impact other parts of the country through possible transfer and disposal of waste materials. Talking with other SSABs throughout the country is an excellent way to foster this dialogue and will also allow sharing of problems, experiences, and solutions.



6. LEADERSHIP

Strong leadership is critical to an effective SSAB. At the early stages, this leadership will have to come from DOE. Clearly identifying the need for an SSAB, working with stakeholders to identify a structure and convening process for the SSAB, and getting the SSAB off the ground are all the responsibility of DOE. Once the SSAB is assembled, the mantle of leadership will have to be transferred to the board and its chair. Therefore, as soon as convening is complete, a chair needs to be identified to take over leadership of the board and to assist in establishing an identity for the board separate from DOE.

6.1 THE CHAIR

The chair is an important component of an effective SSAB. There are many activities and much planning that must be coordinated and managed to get the board off the ground and begin making progress. A good staff will be instrumental, but the staff must be closely supervised by a member of the board itself.

The Chair as Project Director

In essence, the SSAB can be viewed as a complex decision-making project and, in many cases, the chair will be required to act as the project director. There are a great many duties that must be coordinated for the SSAB to function effectively.

Chart Course for the SSAB	It is up to the chair to ensure that the mission of the SSAB is well understood and the activities of the SSAB are generating the desired progress.
Facilitate Board Activities	One of the crucial functions of the chair is to ensure that all sides of every issue are heard and evaluated within the board's deliberations. As such, the chair should be the managing leader, but not the opinion leader of the group.
Ensure Sufficient Education	The chair will be instrumental in working with all members of the board to ensure the necessary baseline level of understanding of all issues is achieved.
Assist in Public Outreach	The chair must encourage and work with members to ensure that SSAB activities and results are reaching and representative of desired constituencies.
Act as Spokesperson	The chair will often be asked to serve as the public spokesperson to the press, national DOE functions, other SSABs, and headquarters level government agencies.

Qualifications of the Chair

Neutral

Chairs may either be appointed in the convening process or elected by the full membership. The chair at Fernald was appointed by the convener so that an individual with the characteristics necessary to lead the board could be found. An election by the members will not necessarily result in the best individual for the job, especially with regard to desired neutrality, and may result in an early divisiveness among some members because "their" candidate was not elected. The following characteristics are important to the role of the chair:

It is the role of the chair to ensure that all sides are heard and factored into the SSABs activities. To do this, the chair must be someone who can win the respect of each of the members on the SSAB. The chair needs to be able to put aside personal opinions, listen to all sides with an open mind, and encourage and lead all members to do the same. A person who is interested and committed to finding common ground, but who does not have a clearly defined position is best. Local academic institutions and retired judges or community leaders are good sources. Experience with facilitation and consensus-building is also very helpful.

Experienced

Substantive experience in environmental issues is helpful, but not essential. However, experience in working with and leading groups and strong interpersonal skills are essential. The chair will be called upon regularly to lead the SSAB, ensure that productive group processes occur, and resolve disputes among members. It will also be the role of the chair to represent the SSAB at national functions and in dealing with DOE to get needed support or information as well as present SSAB recommendations. Because not all members of the SSAB will be able to travel to national functions, the chair must assimilate the input and experience of all members for the overall benefit of the SSAB and the site. The Chair's ability to publicly present SSAB positions will be instrumental to its overall success.

Available

For the chair to do justice to the role, he or she must have a significant amount of time available to devote to board activities. Individuals with inflexible work hours or many other commitments are not good candidates.

6.2 DOE

One of the most difficult tasks facing DOE managers will be finding the right level of involvement in the SSAB. DOE needs to be fully invested and involved in the SSAB and recognize the value of independent stakeholder input to decisions. DOE needs to provide strong leadership in establishing the SSAB without seeking to control the SSAB once it is underway. DOE does have a strong role in setting the overall goals of the SSAB. Ultimately it is DOE's advisory board, established to improve the decisions that need to be made and to promote a better relationship with stakeholders. It makes sense for DOE to request that the SSAB focus on specific issues that are important and necessary to site cleanup and that require detailed public involvement. To do this is not controlling the SSAB, but rather directing it to focus attention where it is likely to have the greatest impact. DOE should not direct the SSAB in how to go about this work or steer the group toward any predetermined solutions. The most important benefit of the SSAB is to view the site and its problems from many perspectives to gain as complete and unbiased an understanding as possible.



7. COMMITMENT

Once the decision is made to establish an SSAB, there is no turning back. All stakeholders must be fully committed to working together to make the SSAB work effectively. Most important, DOE and the regulatory agencies must demonstrate early and continuous commitment to the success of the SSAB.

7.1 DOE

The single most important component of an SSAB's success is a sincere commitment on the part of DOE and its contractors to support the SSAB and seriously consider its recommendations. A sure-fire way to ensure the failure of an SSAB is through the lack of acceptance to the process by DOE. The SSAB process is a great opportunity for DOE to improve the decisions that are made. In order to achieve this, however, it must fully understand and accept the role of the SSAB and its own role in the SSAB process. The facility must understand the need that drives the establishment of a SSAB and truly want the advice that is being requested of the SSAB. A SSAB is not a "rubber stamp" committee. If the only reason a SSAB is being established is to fulfill a headquarters requirement, failure and further distrust will undoubtedly result.

It is up to DOE to ensure that the SSAB is integrated into the day-to-day decision-making activities. This requires establishing regular meetings and communication with the chair and other members of the SSAB to share information and ideas. It is important that the activities of the SSAB and the decision-making process get on the same track so that information between the two is relevant and timely.

DOE must be committed to providing timely and accurate information in the format requested. The level of support the SSAB receives from the DOE and its contractors will correlate directly to the ability of these groups to develop timely and responsive recommendations.

DOE's credibility with the SSAB will be built on its responsiveness. This does not mean that DOE needs to do everything that the SSAB recommends, but that the issues that are important to the SSAB need to be important to DOE. Requests for information, recommendations, and opportunities for input must be taken seriously and given the same level of attention and hard work by DOE that the SSAB is giving them.

7.2 REGULATORS

In addition to DOE, the commitment of the regulatory agencies will be important to the success of the SSAB. Regular attendance at meetings and responsiveness to the SSAB's inquiries are essential. Regulators need to show that they are willing to roll up their sleeves with the other stakeholders and work on the difficult issues facing the site.

7.3 LETTERS OF COMMITMENT

At the start of the SSAB process, it is useful to get letters from the senior management of DOE, U.S. EPA, and the State to demonstrate their commitment to the SSAB and its recommendations. The SSAB cannot and should not ask any of the government players to abdicate their ultimate decision-making authority. However, it is fair and necessary for the SSAB to insist of government commitment to the following:

- 1) Fair, accurate, and timely responses to information requests
- 2) Coordination with the decision-making schedule to ensure meaningful input
- 3) Active efforts to reach a consensus
- 4) Careful consideration of all SSAB recommendations
- 5) Detailed explanations of any variances from SSAB recommendations.



8. GOALS

In order to be truly effective, a SSAB must establish clear goals and a clear understanding of its role in the overall decision-making process. An overall defined mission as well as ongoing objectives are important to focus the efforts of the board and provide a continuous sense of progress and achievement.

8.1 MISSION

A focused SSAB needs a clear sense of mission to guide it through the sometimes tedious process of evaluating data and alternative decisions. In planning for a focused SSAB, the board will begin with a focused list of needs that have been identified by DOE. The board, of course, is free to accept or amend these needs according to its own agenda with the understanding that the range of its potential effectiveness is probably within the big picture items that DOE has identified. The board must take these DOE requests and the concerns and issues that individual members bring to the table and develop a specific set of goals for it to achieve. A mission statement that is developed based on these goals as a group can be an effective way to create a cohesive sense of purpose and can be used to focus the group over time and assist in avoiding the temptation to tackle sideline issues which distract groups from their main goals.

8.2 SHORT AND LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

In addition to its overall understanding of mission, an SSAB will need to establish objectives over the course of its life to ensure that work is focused and progress is being made. Short-term objectives are important for the board to get a sense of achievement early in the process and to help avoid the burnout that often accompanies long efforts without a definable product.



9. SUPPORT

SSAB members have limited time to devote to SSAB activities, and they have varying levels of knowledge about the site and cleanup activities and decisions. SSABs therefore require a significant amount of support both in staff and information.

9.1 STAFF

Identifying staff needs and organization is an important early step in establishing an SSAB. This is a key activity for leadership of the chair to emerge. Deliberations about staffing is most effectively done by a subcommittee because of the amount of time and energy required. It is up to the chair to lead the effort to ensure that all of the members issues are input to the process and the ultimate staffing situation is acceptable to all members.

Values for Staffing SSABs

There are a number of options for procuring support for an SSAB. The SSAB can directly hire a staff of individuals to work for the board or can hire consultants who provide specific services to the board at a negotiated cost. The SSAB can also use existing site contract staff as needed or on a loaner basis to keep overall costs down.

The best approaches may include some combination of all of these. The staffing process should be well thought out to meet the needs of the specific SSAB within the resources that are available. The Fernald Citizens Task Force

uses a combination of existing contractor staff and direct consultants. The values used in staffing the Fernald SSAB include:

Efficiency

The whole premise behind public participation is to assist the government in making safe and efficient decisions based on the stakeholders concerns. If the SSAB falls prey to the same types of waste and abuse that the public has so long fought against at these sites, its credibility and effectiveness will be lost. As such, it is important to avoid too large a staff or too lavish resources. It is best to look for the most efficient system of support that will meet the needs of the board. Identify areas where it may be possible for a single individual to function in more than one role and making the best use of existing site contractor staff. The Fernald Citizens Task Force has made maximum use of existing staff and resources combined with an independent technical facilitator to ensure that the information generated meets the needs of the Task Force.

Flexibility

The precise needs of the SSAB may not always be predictable. Resource structures which allow short-notice procurement of needed specialists are useful. There is only so much money available to the SSAB. Large dedicated staffs are high-maintenance and expensive and may not contain the broad range of skills, experience, or training needed to support the SSAB. The more trappings of a large bureaucracy the SSAB takes on, the more it will begin to look and act like a bureaucracy, greatly limiting its effectiveness and credibility while wasting limited resources.

Staffing Requirements

Qualified and experienced staff are essential to getting useful results from a SSAB. There are at least five staff functions that have been identified in the experience at Fernald. While each of these functions are important, they do not each represent a full-time position.

Board Administrative Assistant

One individual is needed to provide the overall administrative and logistical support to the board. This individual will report primarily to the chair and serve in the role of executive assistant in ensuring all the boards administrative work gets done. This is easily a full-time position, but can be ably handled by existing contractor staff without conflict.

**Administrative
Support Staff**

There are many tasks such as meeting logistics, report preparation, photocopying, and mailing that can be very time-consuming but do not need to be done directly by the board administrative assistant. Instead, help can be obtained on an as-needed basis from the site contractor staff.

**Meeting
Facilitator**

A third-party neutral facilitator to run board meetings, while not essential, can be very useful in keeping the board on track, resolving disputes, and reaching decisions. This role should be performed by an independent party whose responsibility is directly to the SSAB.

**Technical
Coordinator**

A highly experienced technical professional is needed to identify information needs for the board and ensure that they are produced accurately, on time, and in a useful format. This role should be performed by an independent party whose responsibility is directly to the SSAB.

**Technical
Support Staff**

A variety of technical support staff will be needed to produce the myriad of technical information needed for SSAB activities. To a certain degree this staff can be pulled from the site contractor on an as needed basis under the overall direction of the technical coordinator. DOE site contractor commitment to providing the needed level of support and openness in releasing requested information is essential to the overall functioning of the SSAB. It is highly inefficient for the SSAB to try to recreate information that already exists. In some instances, specialized outside consultants will be needed to support the SSAB in such areas as risk assessment and economic analyses.

9.2 INFORMATION

Information is the lifeblood of an SSAB. One function of the SSAB will be to overcome individual preconceptions about the site and cleanup options, and work as a group to develop sound solutions. This can only be done if the board has access to accurate, unbiased information presented to them in an understandable and useful form.

General categories of information will need to be presented to the board over time as their decision-making progresses. Fundamental issues that need to be presented include:

Baseline Understanding	A fundamental understanding of site conditions and technological options must be presented before any decision-making can be conducted.
Understanding Risk	Risk concepts must be understood and the risks presented at the site and as a result of different cleanup options must be clear for the board to evaluate potential recommendations.
Costs and Benefits	There are a myriad of economic, social, health, and environmental costs and benefits that must be well understood for decision-making.

How Much Information is Enough

One of the most difficult tasks is knowing how much information is enough to provide to the SSAB. There is a strong temptation to provide SSAB members with every possible piece of information concerning the site. Very quickly, such an approach can bury an SSAB in so much information that it will be unable to function effectively.

Treat Board Members as Decision Makers	Even though it does not have decision-making authority, the SSAB is akin to an executive decision-making group. The focus here is not to make SSAB members technical experts in all aspects of site evaluation and cleanup but to provide them with the type and level of information needed to make decisions.
Focus Information on the Goals of the Board	Every last piece of data and every last aspect of the site are not essential to make decisions. Provide good executive summary level information and let the board members know where more detailed backup information can be found.
Make use of Existing Knowledge	It is important to understand that not all members will have the same level of understanding of the site and the cleanup issues involved. Some will be very familiar with this information and others will be seeing these issues for the first time. Thus board members will be able to assist each other early in the process to achieve the minimum level of knowledge they will need to go through their decision-making process.

Presenting Information

Providing information in an understandable and accessible format is probably the most important function of the SSAB staff in the process. In most cases, it will be essential for information to be evaluated, synthesized, and presented by the SSAB staff or third party consultant for it to be acceptable and useful to the SSAB. Low levels of trust and credibility of DOE and its contractors preclude the direct flow of information, and SSAB members will not always understand the questions to ask to ensure the information they are receiving is accurate and complete.

Use Existing Information but not Existing Formats

In most cases, the majority of information that the SSAB will need in order to make quality recommendations already exists in some form or other. However, traditional remedial investigation and feasibility study reports are of little value because of their size and poor organization. Existing public relations material is of little value because of its lack of specificity. This information needs to be repackaged for the board in a way that allows for easy access to information and reference throughout the process. It is essential always to fully identify the sources of information and provide easy access to those members who wish to delve deeper into original source documents. When presenting or discussing technical information, it is important to have the relevant experts present. This allows for the important first-hand interaction between the SSAB and the site staff. It also allows more complete and immediate answers to stakeholder concerns and a greater understanding of stakeholder issues for the technical staff.

Pay Attention to Presentation

Information should not only be presented for original understanding but to be used regularly as reference material throughout decision-making. It is helpful to think of all of the information that is given to the board as tools to making decisions. The overall set of information that the board will use represents the board's "toolbox." This toolbox, like any toolbox, should be organized, portable, and sufficient for the job at hand. At Fernald this toolbox fits within a one-inch binder. It is essential to avoid reports that must be read cover to cover in order to glean a few salient points. A picture is worth a thousand words and tables, graphs, and maps are the best vehicles to transmit information. In meetings, the talking head approach to presenting information should be the course of last resort. Be creative and interactive in presenting information. Watching a technology at work is much more effective than watching an engineer describe how a technology works. Always engage the members in conversation about issues, rather than merely present information on issues. Technical exercises and activities that bring members to an understanding of how things work are the most effective.



10. PROCEDURES

Process issues are extremely important to the effective functioning of a SSAB. Because of the many diverse interests that are represented and the importance of the issues to be evaluated, it is important that all parties understand the procedures to be followed and acceptance in to those procedures before SSAB activities begin. Some key issues that must be taken into account include:

Develop A Decision-Making Process Up Front

The board needs to understand how decisions will be made before the process begins. A good decision-making process for the board should lead members through a process of understanding and evaluating information over time so that at the point of actually making decisions, all of the contentious issues have been discussed and worked out. Often, a great deal of work must be done before getting to the actual point of decision and board members need to be reminded of where they are in the decision process and how it will all come together. As much as possible, strict votes should be avoided on substantive issues in lieu of finding compromise positions that the entire board can support. Documents that are produced should be consensus documents with contentious issues or minority opinions identified where appropriate.

Set Ground Rules for Members

It is important that the overall organization of the board is well understood by members. Though existing charters and ground rules can be used as models for the board, it is important that all members ratify these documents and reach consensus on the major issues of conducting SSAB business. Issues that must be understood are the size of the board, attendance requirements, expectations regarding participation, and roles of site staff and outside consultants.

**Develop A
Detailed
Work Plan**

It is important that a structured approach to developing recommendations be developed so that board members understand the activities that will be undertaken and their roles. A detailed work plan describing this approach is necessary to guide the board and show how decision-making will progress and be completed in the required time. The work plan will also provide DOE with an understanding of the products it will be receiving and when they will be available, as well as the support it will need to provide. To the degree possible, the timing of board activities and deliverables need to coincide with the existing decision-making schedule for the site. Many sites are operating under existing Consent Agreements or Federal Facility Compliance Agreements that can only be changed with great difficulty. It is important to identify early in the process areas where the SSAB decision-making cannot effectively tie into site decision-making. Sites without agreements should consider working directly with the SSAB to reorganize the decision-making process to include SSAB input.

**Develop Detailed
Meeting Plans**

SSAB meetings should not be free-for-alls, but rather structured sessions designed to coincide with the activities of the work plan. Meetings need to be well planned and information provided in advance to members to show how the meeting will be conducted and how it fits into the overall approach to decision-making.

**Develop
Products**

Recommendations should be clearly planned for and presented in a recognizable SSAB format. Planning for specific products at different points throughout the process will help focus the SSAB on completing its work in a timely manner and making its positions and recommendations clear.

**Include
Public
Participation**

It is essential that full public access to the SSAB be provided throughout the process. Members need to understand their roles with regard to public access and the specific activities that will be undertaken.

**Set
Regular
Meetings**

Because these boards consist of volunteers who are donating their spare time, every effort needs to be made to accommodate the schedules of members who have other career and family obligations. These issues should be discussed with the board early on and a decision reached as to a regular meeting time and adhered to so that individuals can adjust their schedules. Planning the next meeting on a case-by-case basis is very time consuming and does

not allow members to build in regular time for board activities. Evening meetings are often popular, but keep in mind that there is often very little energy left at the end of the day for the types of active meetings that are required of these boards. Saturday morning meetings are often less preferable because of the value of weekend time, but are usually more productive. The frequency and duration of meetings must be in keeping with the realistic capabilities of a volunteer board. More than once a month is often difficult if one takes into account the many other site-related activities that occur which members attend. Also, the ability of staff to respond to board requests and generate information for following meetings is often stretched thin if more frequent meetings are held. Subcommittees can be an effective way to expand the work of the board without needing to hold more frequent full board meetings. This allows members with more time to devote to the process the opportunity to get more involved without undermining the overall effectiveness of the board. A regular meeting location should be considered to provide the board with a level of comfort and familiarity which are assets to developing a positive working relationship. To the degree possible, meeting space should be found close to the site so that the board retains its strong connections with the site and the local public can attend. Meeting space should take into account sufficient room for public attendance.

