NATIONAL LABORATORY DIRECTORS' COUNCIL

OCTOBER 2024

The National Laboratory Directors' Council (NLDC)

The National Laboratory Directors' Council (NLDC) is a self-organized, self-governing body composed of the Laboratory Directors from the seventeen DOE National Laboratories (Table 1). The NLDC advances the effectiveness of the DOE National Laboratory System in addressing national needs and provides an interface to DOE on issues and concerns of common interest. The NLDC also provides a forum for presenting the Secretary and DOE senior management with consensus views on matters that affect the laboratories and their ability to contribute to the DOE mission. With its standing working groups, it represents the most senior operational and scientific leadership at the Laboratories and is thus a key mechanism for coordinating across the DOE laboratory complex on matters ranging from scientific directions to operational issues and requirements. In short, in DOE's diverse federated environment, the NLDC is a critical resource available to the Department's senior leadership to inform DOE strategy and policy.

1. Governance

A subset of NLDC members comprise an Executive Committee (EC) that organizes and coordinates the activities of the NLDC. The EC is comprised of four members who collectively represent DOE Mission areas: Science (SC), Energy (E), Nuclear Security (NS), and Environment (EM). The EC members are elected by the full membership to serve two-year terms. The full NLDC also elects one EC member to serve as Chair for a two-year term. The NLDC has a Secretariat who manages meetings and operations for the NLDC.

2. DOE Interactions

The NLDC holds four strategic retreats per year, three of which typically include face-to-face meetings with the Secretary of Energy in Washington, DC. Attendees may also include the Deputy Secretary, the Under Secretaries or their representatives and other functionaries (e.g., the General Counsel, CFO or Assistant Secretaries) depending on the agenda. The NLDC Secretariat works with DOE on the agendas and briefing materials. Meetings cover a broad range of topics from scientific strategies to operational issues. Selected topics of discussion over the past year have included Artificial Intelligence, research security, and international competitiveness in science and technology. The NLDC, working with DOE, is responsible for educating various stakeholders through events such as the periodic Lab Days on the Hill. The NLDC also sponsors the Oppenheimer Science and Energy Leadership Program (OSELP) intended to prepare the next generation of scientific leaders. The NLDC has also helped to identify issues that impact efficient operations at the Labs and review proposed policy changes through its representation in the Laboratory Operations Board, Cyber Security Council and the DOE Directives Review Board.

Overall, the value of the NLDC lies in its ability to provide guidance on how to integrate across the programs at DOE in order to allow the enterprise to be more than the sum of its parts.

3. Working Groups

To provide insights on specific issues and impacts, and to help work with the various DOE offices on policy implementation, the NLDC has thirteen standing Working Groups that represent the spectrum of issues including research, operations, information technology, finance, legal, communications, federal relations, human capital, STEM and environmental health and safety. Similar to the NLDC, an Executive Committee that is representative of the seventeen Laboratories typically governs each working group with annual elections; a group listing is summarized in Table 2. While the formal interface with DOE is through the NLDC, each working group has routine interactions with DOE counterparts to facilitate discussions and issues resolution. Additionally, two CROs and two COOs serve on the DOE Laboratory Operations Board.

a. The Chief Research Officers group (NLCRO) provides advice to the NLDC regarding scientific and programmatic issues. It serves as a convening forum for communication and provides leadership for major scientific activities associated with the strategic direction for the laboratories. The NLCRO recently supported the NLDC in the preparation of an important report, *Ensuring U.S. Leadership in a Competitive Future*, which considers the current state of the national labs, potential opportunities, and a desired future state for several key areas intended to keep pace with international rivals who seek to match or outdo the capabilities of the U.S. The NLCRO group also provides leadership for

key aspects of the security risk matrix and its implementation, collaboratively, balancing the importance of major scientific advances while mitigating risk.

b. The Chief Operations Officers group (NLCOO) advises the NLDC on issues and improvement opportunities related to the management and operation of the National Laboratory infrastructure. The NLCOO evaluates resource impacts of administrative and regulatory requirements to facilitate productive and cost-effective utilization of the DOE laboratory system; promotes practices based upon performance-based management; and shares best practices and lessons learned. The group meets monthly to discuss various topics of interest and undertakes studies and activities proposed and agreed to by its membership or through other working groups. In response to the recent advancement in artificial intelligence, the NLCOO working group is identifying areas for implementing AI to increase operational efficiencies. The group also contributes to DOE, the NLDC, and other NL working groups on strategic operational issues affecting the lab complex.

c. The Chief Information Officers group (NLCIO) advises the NLDC on issues related to computing, information management and cybersecurity. They provide a forum for communication and coordination of the major activities in information technology, scientific computing, and cybersecurity throughout the National Laboratories. The NLCIO meets regularly with the DOE CIO, the NNSA CIO, and DOE-SC IT leadership to provide advice on benefits and impacts of Federal policy initiatives and to help policy makers understand the impacts of proposals on the unique mission environments at the Laboratories. NLCIO is closely aligned with the DOE Cyber Council, the IMGB, and other councils to advise the Secretary, Undersecretaries and CIO on Department-wide IT Strategy and Policy. The NLCIO charters working groups drawn from their organization's deep technical bench to assist with critical complex-wide IT and Cyber challenges.

d. The Chief Financial Officers group (NLCFO) advises the NLDC on business, financial and procurement issues and provides an interface to DOE-CFO and DOE-MA organizations in these areas. The Council also serves as a forum for information exchange, best practice sharing, audit risk identification, consensus building, and coordination of major initiatives impacting the DOE contractor community in the business, financial and procurement areas. The NLCFO also provides guidance and impact analysis on changes to financial and acquisition DOE Orders, Directives, and the Financial Management Handbook.

e. The Chief Communications Officers group (NLCCO) advises the National Laboratory Directors Council (NLDC) and interacts with Department of Energy communications and public affairs offices on relevant matters across the National Laboratory System (NLS). NLCCO functions include information exchange; consensus building; promotion of best practices and policies; coordination; counsel; and execution of communications-related activities identified by the NLDC, DOE, or NLCCO members for promotion of the scientific missions and value of the NLS. In the past year, the CCO group and their representatives led communications programs highlighting ways the NLS is driving forward AI initiatives, partnered with DOE on the DOE and NLS presence at CERA week, developed a series of videos and products that showcase DOE and the Labs' impact, and hosted workshops on safety communications and leveraging AI for communications.

f. The General Counsel group (NLGC) advises the NLDC on legal issues serving as a forum for communication and coordination of the major legal issues potentially impacting activities at the laboratories. The group also invites subject matter experts from other legal areas (such as Employee and Labor Relations) to facilitate the sharing of information and knowledge across the complex. Their primary interface in DOE is with the DOE General Counsel or his representatives, along with the NNSA General Counsel and his representatives.

g. The Environment, Safety and Health Directors group (NLESHD) proactively advises the NLDC on ES&H issues that are common across the DOE Laboratory complex. The group reviews events and shares lessons learned, identifies best practices, recommends policy and regulatory interpretation and provides assistance in evaluating unique hazards and conditions as required. The group serves as a forum to identify the best subject matter experts across the complex on high priority ES&H topics so they can assist as the need arises.

h. The Chief Human Resources Officers group (NLCHRO) determines areas of mutual interest to the Labs, opportunities or critical complex wide issues that would benefit HR leadership and leverage strategic advantage of National Laboratories and by extension, to the benefit of DOE. The purpose of the group is to optimize their collective effectiveness in human capital and talent management across the complex and provide support to the NLDC and DOE in governance and on critical outcomes which will result in more consistent and efficient performance of human resources. Accomplishments include development and execution of recruiting strategies to showcase the National Laboratory Systems as a preferred employer, a joint effort to increase the diversity of staff across all National Laboratories and create an inclusive working environment for all employees.

i. The National Laboratory Technology Transfer group (NLTT) provides counsel to the NLDC on technology transfer related matters of interest to the Laboratory Directors. The NLTT undertakes studies and activities as proposed and agreed to by the NLDC. Conclusions and recommendations are submitted to the NLDC for approval or further guidance. In addition, the NLTT provides an interface to the DOE on department-wide efforts to increase the transition of

technologies from the laboratory into commercial practice. Over the past year, the NLTT played a key role in supporting the DOE Laboratory License Review Team's assessment of national laboratory licensing practices with a focus on research security and ensuring DOE-funded research results provide economic benefit to the United States. NLTT also engaged with senior DOE officials to recommend updates to the Technology Transfer Mission Clause and collaborated with the DOE Office of Technology Transitions on multi-lab outreach efforts including participation in the Consumer Electronics Show.

j. The Federal Relations group (NLFR) meets on an as-needed basis to share information on policy and legislative issues of mutual interest. The NLFR also supports the NLDC in execution of congressional engagement and messaging.

k. The Laboratory Education Directors' Executive Council (NLED) was established in September 2020 to coordinate cross-complex activities that advance STEM outreach, K-12, university and workforce development programming related to the DOE's national lab missions. The goal of the Council is to achieve STEM access for all and advance workforce initiatives within the laboratory complex. The National Laboratory Director's Council established the working group in response to a recommendation by the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board around STEM opportunities.

l. The Laboratory Community Engaged Research group (NLCER) was established in September 2021, following a June 2021 Place-Based Multilab Workshop, to advise the NLDC and the labs on strategies to improve, sustain and scale community engaged research (CER) within the labs, while achieving increased impact and reduced burden on communities with whom we collaborate. The NLCER is pursuing two initiatives: (1) Fostering laboratory leadership by serving as an agile collaborative POC for topics of interest to DOE and national lab leadership, and (2) Supporting scale-up strategies through the adoption of best practices and enhanced collaboration across the lab complex. NLCER has hosted several workshops with relevant DOE offices to identify opportunities and challenges in leveraging the physical and intellectual assets of the laboratories to enhance mission delivery through more collaborative and multi-disciplinary approaches embodied in CER principles and practice. A monthly CER Speaker Series and offsite workshops facilitate networking and deeper learning.

m. The Chief Diversity Officers (NLCDO) advise the NLDC on areas of mutual interest to the Laboratories regarding employee engagement, rich talent management and the fostering of a mutually respectful work environment for all employees, regardless of differences. The group identifies and coordinates on opportunities or initiatives that would impact the makeup of the complex workplace, as well as inclusion and belonging across the complex and DOE. The purpose of the group is to optimize their collective effectiveness in strategic talent management to impact underutilization across the complex as well as increase workplace civility, engagement and employee well-being for all complex employees. Accomplishments include the development and execution of recruiting strategies to showcase the National Laboratory Systems as a preferred employer for a rich array of highly talented job seekers, a joint effort to increase the diversity of staff across all National Laboratories, and initiatives to create an inclusive working environment for all complex employees.

TABLE 1: THE NATIONAL LABORATORIES (AS OF OCTOBER 2024)

DOE LABORATORY CONTRACTOR
Ames National Laboratory Iowa State University of Science & Technology
Argonne National Laboratory (ANL) UChicago Argonne, LLC
Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL) Brookhaven Science Associates
Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (FNAL) Fermi Research Alliance, LLC
Idaho National Laboratory (INL) Battelle Energy Alliance, LLC
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) University of California
Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) Lawrence Livermore National Security, LLC
Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) Triad National Security, LLC
National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL) Government-owned, government-operated
National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) Alliance for Sustainable Energy, LLC
Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) UT-Battelle, LLC
Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) Battelle Memorial Institute
Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory (PPPL) Princeton University
Sandia National Laboratories (SNL) National Technology and Engineering Solutions of Sandia, LLC
Savannah River National Laboratory (SRNL) Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC
SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory Stanford University
Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility (TJNAF) Jefferson Science Associates, LLC

TABLE 2: NLDC WORKING GROUPS (AS OF OCTOBER 2024)

WORKING GROUP
Chief Research Officer (NLCRO)
Chief Operations Officer (NLCCO)
Chief Information Officer (NLCIO)
Chief Financial Officer (NLCFO
Chief Communications Officer (NLCCO)
General Counsel (NLGC)
Environment, Safety and Health Director (NLESHD)
Chief Human Resources Officer (NLCHRO)
National Laboratory Technology Transfer (NLTT)
Federal Relations (NLFR)
Education Director (NLED)
Community Engaged Research (NLCER)
Chief Diversity Officer (NLCRO)