

**Board of Scientific Advisors (BSA)
caBIG® Oversight *ad hoc* Subcommittee Meeting**

Cabinet and Judiciary Rooms
Hyatt Regency Bethesda Hotel
One Bethesda Metro Center (7400 Wisconsin Avenue)
Bethesda, MD 20814

November 6, 2011
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. EST

SUMMARY

Participants:

Subcommittee Members

Dr. Daniel Masys, Chair
Dr. Brian D. Athey
Dr. Andrea Califano
Dr. Robert Comis
Mr. Paul Fearn
Dr. Gad Getz (by teleconference)
Dr. Joe Gray
Dr. Rebecca Kush
Dr. Lincoln Stein
Dr. Jean Wang (by teleconference)

BSA Members

Dr. Todd Golub
Dr. Jim Omel

Executive Secretaries:

Dr. Paulette S. Gray
Mr. John Czajkowski

Other NCI Attendees

Dr. Douglas Lowy
Dr. Robert Croyle
Dr. Ken Buetow
Dr. Sheila A. Prindiville
Ms. Claire Harris
Ms. Andrea Collins

Other Attendees

Ms. Alana Gardner (Deloitte Consulting)
Mr. Paul Goldberg (The Cancer Letter)
Dr. Jennifer Lee (The Scientific Consulting Group, Inc., rapporteur)
Dr. LeeAnn Bailey (Deloitte Consulting)

Call to Order and Comments—Dr. Daniel Masys

Dr. Masys asked the Subcommittee members and meeting guests to introduce themselves. Following introductions, Dr. Lowy thanked the Subcommittee for their efforts helping the NCI with the very important issue of refocusing caBIG® research efforts.

Review: Sample caBIG® Project Using Project Template and Review Criteria—Members

Dr. Masys proposed that during this meeting the Subcommittee focus on whether the project template prepared by the NCI provided sufficient information for review and whether any changes to the format should be made. Two projects were provided by the NCI as examples: the *in silico* centers and imaging. The imaging project was chosen because it touched on the development of tools, metadata, and infrastructure, thus spanning a wide range of needs of the community served by caBIG®. The *in silico* centers provided an example of how current strategies can lead to new capabilities and was science-focused.

In regard to whether the templates for these two projects provided enough information, Dr. Comis suggested that in the imaging example, a strategic context, a picture of the competition faced by the

project (ie., current alternatives to the proposed development), a brief assessment of likely outcomes if the project was not funded, and the urgency of funding needs were missing. Dr. Stein added that an evaluation of a project's interoperability, how it will achieve interoperability, and the consequences if the project does not continue also were not provided in the template. Members requested that other sources of support for caBIG[®] projects be added to the template. Dr. Joe Gray proposed that a 20- to 30-minute presentation by Dr. Buetow on each product to the relevant workgroup would greatly facilitate the evaluation of projects. The templates were not intended to include all information about projects, and this would provide an opportunity to obtain additional input. In addition, the NCI should provide its own assessment of the value of each project.

Community input into setting caBIG[®] funding priorities would be valuable. Dr. Buetow said that the NCI currently uses a peer review process to identify unmet needs. Dr. Paulette Gray provided further details, indicating that the procedures for this are unique to caBIG[®]. In response to Dr. Joe Gray's suggestion of issuing a public Request for Information (RFI), Dr. Califano noted that a separate identification effort already had been carried out by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The Subcommittee requested that Dr. Buetow provide any written documentation about the process used to identify unmet needs.

The Subcommittee discussed the format in which the information in the templates was written. The opinion was expressed that in general, the letters from the principal investigators have limited value as they have an understandable advocacy position for continuing their work. In response to Subcommittee questions, NCI staff noted that the text in the project-specific templates was written by a collection of NCI staff, parts of which used material provided by the principal investigators.

Members suggested that projects should be reviewed according to how well they fulfill the mission of caBIG[®]. To that end, the NCI should provide its strategic view on what caBIG[®] intended to accomplish in the next few years. The review process would benefit from the NCI's input on how a specific project fits into caBIG[®]'s strategic plan. Dr. Masys asked if the NCI had a formal strategic plan for caBIG[®] and whether it had been revised following the Workgroup's March 2011 report on caBIG[®] and reduced funding levels for the coming fiscal year. Dr. Buetow replied that the NCI was in the process of updating it and that he was willing to share it with the Subcommittee. It was discussed whether the Subcommittee should provide input to develop the strategic goals of caBIG[®], and Dr. Paulette Gray indicated that the NCI would respond promptly to all constructive recommendations. Dr. Kush requested that Dr. Buetow brief the Subcommittee on the caBIG[®] strategic plan at the upcoming Subcommittee meeting in December 2011.

Dr. Califano agreed that a long-term goal of the Subcommittee should be to establish a strategic plan for caBIG[®], but in the short term members should concentrate on identifying and evaluating projects that were imminently at risk of losing support. Dr. Buetow noted that the *in silico* centers were chosen as an example because they were one such endeavor, but other projects will be in a similar situation in upcoming funding cycles. The centers could be evaluated either individually or as part of a single program, depending on the Subcommittee's decision. Dr. Buetow agreed to prioritize the list of projects so that those with short funding timeframes would be considered first by the Subcommittee.

The criteria for review were debated. Dr. Califano reminded the Subcommittee that one of the original findings of the Subcommittee was that caBIG[®] should refocus its funding to better reflect the needs of the community. These needs should define the priorities of caBIG[®], not technology *per se*. During the course of previous meetings, the Subcommittee developed a set of evaluation criteria, which would be applied to the project information as presented by the sample templates. Dr. Paulette Gray proposed that establishing general criteria that would apply to the program as a whole as well as those that would be specific to each workshop's topic could be a fruitful approach.

Dr. Kush queried whether the list Dr. Buetow provided included all efforts funded by caBIG[®]. She was concerned because projects focused on infrastructure appeared to have been omitted. Dr. Masys suggested that if infrastructure projects did not fit well within the context of the current template, a new one could be designed for those projects. Dr. Buetow stated that the spreadsheet of projects was an attempt to be comprehensive but included only those projects funded directly by caBIG[®], not those that contributed to its goals.

The process by which projects would be reviewed was discussed. It was recognized that once the review process was begun, questions might arise reflecting revisions to the criteria for evaluating projects. Workgroups establishing a ranked list of projects was discussed, but it was decided that because the number of projects being evaluated was not large, a positive or negative decision was more appropriate. Dr. Paulette Gray agreed that a conceptual rather than a study section process was preferable, and the Subcommittee agreed that a concept review was appropriate for new starts, similar to the concept reviews done by the parent BSA committee. Dr. Masys asked that the published criteria used by the BSA for concept reviews be provided to the Subcommittee.

The procedure for acting on Subcommittee recommendations was detailed. Once the Subcommittee has agreed upon their recommendation that future new caBIG projects or programs be in the form of a traditional Request for Application (RFA) or Request for Proposals (RFP), its input is considered by the senior NCI leadership. After the leadership confers, the case is presented to the BSA, who makes the final advisory decision. If the Subcommittee recommends continuing funding of an existing project or program under caBIG[®], they report their recommendations to BSA and ultimately the senior NCI leadership decides. Dr. Lowy pointed out that funding through a contract extension generally occurs quickly. Dr. Masys suggested that the Subcommittee not focus on funding mechanisms, and put its attention more on what should be done than how to do it. Dr. Golub agreed, stating that the charge of the Subcommittee would best be served by determining what fraction of the caBIG[®] budget different research areas merited.

Future Project Review Schedule—Members

Each of the caBIG[®] projects in Dr. Buetow's list has been assigned to one of the Subcommittee Workgroups. Dr. Buetow will prioritize the projects for each group. Dr. Masys proposed that the Workgroups review both the *in silico* centers and imaging project in time for the December 2011 meeting. The imaging project was assigned to the clinical workgroup while the *in silico* centers were matched with the basic science group. Dr. Paulette Gray pointed out that there was considerable overlap between workgroups; therefore, almost all of the members should have the opportunity to participate in a review. Dr. Masys suggested that each workgroup elect a chair at its first meeting, and it would be useful for each project being reviewed to have a discussion lead as well, in a manner analogous to the primary reviewer assignments in study section reviews.

BSA Briefing Topics—Members

Dr. Masys noted that he had revised the slide on caBIG[®] finances in the presentation to the BSA on Monday, November 7, 2011, as requested by the Subcommittee. He asked if the Subcommittee would like to make other changes to the presentation. Dr. Joe Gray proposed including a slide on the decisionmaking process. Dr. Masys agreed but will describe it orally because handouts have already been printed.

Dr. Golub asked what the Subcommittee's view was on whether it had corrected the course being taken by caBIG[®]. Dr. Joe Gray responded that he believed the Subcommittee had successfully established a

process by which to review caBIG[®], but that it was too early to comment upon overall course corrections since the Subcommittee has not yet done even the first project reviews. One role of the BSA could be to educate the public that caBIG[®] remains viable. The data from Dr. Masys' presentation will be made public, providing evidence that significant funding for caBIG[®] continues to be appropriated. Dr. Masys asked for other points that Subcommittee members might want to present to the BSA and for any other new business.

Dr. Paulette Gray noted that all meeting materials were now posted on a BSA Working Group website and that a Wiki or Sharepoint for members to exchange documents was in the process of being set up.

Adjournment – Dr. Daniel R. Masys

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.