

ASN Advisory Committee on Ensuring Trust in Nutrition Science
CALL NOTES
Monday, July 17, 2017

Bert Garza, Chair
Sylvia Rowe
Eric Campbell
Patrick Stover
Catherine Bertini
Cathie Woteki

Sarah Ohlhorst, staff

Committee Review of DRAFT Sections 1, 2, 3, and portions of 4

Section 1

Committee members stated that Section 1 is extremely well written and well described, with no major gaps.

So many of the dramatic changes described in Section 1 have made the role of gatekeeper (experts in government, academic community, etc.) less effective, especially social media. Section 1 could acknowledge this when setting the landscape. Anyone can become the expert of the day and there is so much noise, it affects the ability of valid messages to get through and be trusted.

The whole regulatory system places a significant burden on the food industry – the safety of food products, all claims made about a product must have a scientific basis, and all labeling must be truthful and not misleading. Food and nutrition research is important to the industry in this way. Relationships between industry and nonprofit organizations are commonplace and are necessary because of diminishing in-house industry research. This needs more exposition in Section 1.

It was suggested that the opening of Section 1 reference the recent Pew report to support the first sentence.

It was also suggested that “within the field of food science and nutrition” be added after “other professional scientific societies” in the final paragraph of Section 1.

Section 2

It was not clear to all committee members where the data for the charts comes from, as the prior paragraph states what information we do not have, but then the charts seem to show we do have data. It is difficult to understand what the charts are highlighting and this should be made clearer to readers.

Committee members asked that use of the term “publicly available” be clarified in Section 2. It is unclear now if publicly available means the findings or the data are not available to the public.

The communications section has now been changed to information dissemination, and shows different approaches which are integrated and distinct. This portion of the report will be sent to the committee by early next week.

Section 3

More general definitions are needed in this section. For example, consumers should be separated from other stakeholders within this section.

This section should describe more what the food and nutrition research supported by or conducted at HHS and USDA covers.

Committee members noted that there is a difference between 501c3s and NGOs and that this section should differentiate these categories, primarily on the basis of their activities. For example, FRAC is on the ground, while Foundations are funders, and others are advocacy-focused. A distinction will be important to help readers understand these differences.

Since “G. Health care costs related to diet-induced chronic disease and the increasing need for multisectoral engagement in nutrition research” doesn’t focus on a stakeholder group as the other portions of Section 3 do, it was suggested that it be moved to a different place in the report. The costs of care are born by the American people by transfers of wealth to the government so it was suggested that it may fit better as a subsection under consumers. It was also suggested that it be moved to Section 1 where we discuss NCDs within the statement of the problem.

Committee members pointed out that nutrition research funding at NIH from 1985 to 2009 was completely different from today. It should be noted that NIH funding has consistently decreased since then, and is now at historic lows. The same can be said for USDA funding, which is lower in real-terms now than it was in 2010. It was also suggested to include a definition of federal nutrition research.

Portions of Section 4

The portions of Section 4 shared to date all look solid overall (Transparency; COI and Objectivity; Public Benefit; & Rigor, Reproducibility, and Misconduct).

DRAFT Recommendations

Dr. Garza suggested that the committee ignore the draft recommendations for now, as they will be cleaned up further before the committee is asked to review and react. Typically the writing team provides background on the expansive topics, then a nutrition-specific background, then any snowballing or specific expertise brought in to address gaps, and finally includes relevancy to ASN. Through that, the writing team has been jotting down potential recommendations to put forward to the committee. The writing team will also look to the committee to provide further recommendations.

Also, the committee will need to include expected outcomes of each recommendation. However, it was cautioned that if something doesn’t come to fruition, it could be problematic to address expected outcomes.

Dr. Garza reminded the committee that the primary audience of this report is ASN; secondarily, other food and nutrition-related groups; and more broadly, this report should be of interest to all of the stakeholder groups highlighted in Section 3.

Next Steps

The next Committee call will be held on Wednesday, August 9, 2017 at 1:00pm EST. Sarah will send the first draft of recommendations prior to the next call, along with the portions of the report on communications and equity. Dr. Garza intends to have 2-3 discussions of recommendations, with the goal of finalizing the report by October/November.

The call adjourned at 1:56 PM.