Dear Members of the EEMI Advisory Board,

The first live / WebEx-facilitated EEMI Advisory Board meeting took place on February 19th and was attended by a majority of Board Members, augmented by external and internal affiliates as well as leaders of various EEMI focal areas. While the meeting was only two and a half hours long, designed to minimize the burden on attendees, it nonetheless proved very effective for EEMI leadership to emphasize the essence and purpose of EEMI to the Board and most importantly for us to receive from the Board advice and suggestions with which to better execute the EEMI mission.

What follows is a sampling of the advice and suggestions given during the meeting by both those that were present and by those that were electronically connected through WebEx:

1) Advice from a number of members reflected the view that the EEMI should be more focused, with a clearer mission of what it stands for and a roadmap of where it is heading. The question was asked: Is the EEMI primarily focused on education, or research, or advancing public policy for the next generation of self-governance? Board members stated that they could be more helpful to EEMI in providing tailored advice if the EEMI had a sharper focus, perhaps a narrower one, with a smaller set of goals. Also, that a sharper focus should more explicitly stake out goals for strategic connections to other organizations including those in both the public and private sectors. A roadmap or “development plan” would then serve to elaborate the steps to reach EEMI goals to fulfill its clearer mission. Such a roadmap should delineate the steps needed and planned to evolve the focal areas currently on the EEMI plate or those that remain after the focus is sharpened.

2) The next point of advice from members was to establish a Communications Plan for the EEMI. One member recommended a quarterly newsletter that would generate interest in EEMI “in like-minded people.” Another attendee emphasized that we need a communications plan for each focal area since each is of interest to a wholly or partially different audience. If the EEMI mission includes public policy development, then we also need a specific communications component for that. We also need to consider using the EEMI website as a key vehicle for such communications.

3) The third point of advice was for the EEMI to further capitalize on its accomplishments and resources. A member recommended that we use the EEMI website to generate revenues from
targeted organizations, e.g., “you give us a grant; we give you help with your issue.” Another recommended that we take advantage of previously received grants to leverage them for additional ones that are related in subject matter and specific interest to either the same grantors or to other parties that are similarly positioned or interested. One member suggested that we should consider crafting unsolicited research proposals for “very big problems” that could serve to attract major grants or engagements, e.g., the management of sludge waste from the rapid development of large cities in China. It was also suggested that we continue to encourage our existing grantors to solicit contributions from their peers or from similarly situated enterprises in their sectors for upcoming or prospective grants to EEMI.

4) Lastly, we received a number of valuable suggestions such as:

a. Acquiring free interns from the GW Work Study Program to assist us with EEMI projects and tasks.

b. Reaching out to Professors at the GW School of Law to obtain advice on U.S. Government acquisition rules and options to better inform an EEMI proposed project on “flexible” energy savings performance contracts (ESPCs).

c. For our current work on public-private partnerships, we were advised to stress the importance of “transparency and public acceptance” as key factors in their success; and also to consider the potentially successful formula of having system operators working under government leadership as a way to defuse public mistrust of relying on the private sector for running water utilities.

Board members further recommended that we consider having more frequent board meetings – perhaps twice yearly. We take that as a sign that this first meeting was congenial and that the members present have an interest in helping EEMI to achieve its worthy goals as it continues to execute its mission. We will take that recommendation under strong advisement and we will diligently pursue all the advice and suggestions received in this first meeting.

These were some of the key points from the meeting that Jon and I wanted to share with everyone on the Board whether or not you were able to participate. We thank you again for your generosity and for your excellent support and interest in the EEMI.

Very Sincerely,

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Co-Director, EEMI