



Agency Priority Goal Action Plan

Developing an Agency-Wide Partnerships Strategy

Goal Leaders:

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Overview

Goal Statement

- Strategically engage in public and private partnerships to enhance the impact of NSF's investments and contribute to American economic competitiveness and security. To benefit the U.S. scientific and engineering research and education enterprise, by September 30, 2021, NSF will develop and pursue an agency-wide partnerships strategy, components of which include targeted outreach, implementation of process improvements, and improvement of internal and external communications.

Challenge

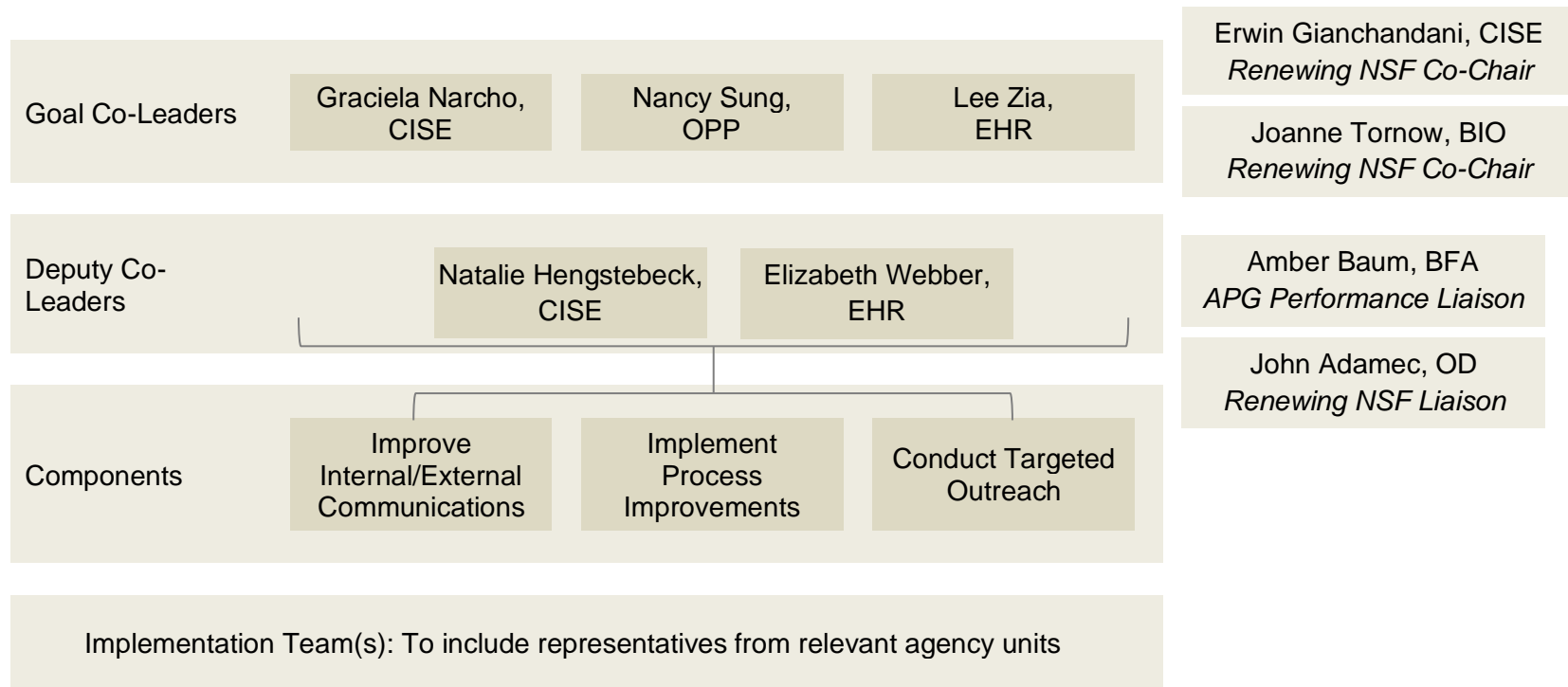
- NSF is a sought-after partner and the range of partnership opportunities present different needs, goals, and priorities. Developing partnerships requires significant time and intellectual capital, as well as strategic foresight.
- Assessing and prioritizing partnership opportunities often happens at the directorate/office level. Efficiencies could be better realized through greater harmonization across the agency.

Opportunity

- Private industry, foundations, and non-profits, together with other federal agencies and international funding organizations, bring additional expertise, resources, and capacity to NSF-funded research. Consequently, pursuing partnership opportunities in a strategic and coordinated manner will allow NSF to accelerate discovery and translation of research to products and services, and enhances preparation of the future workforce to benefit society and grow the American economy.
- Developing a consistent agency-wide partnerships strategy and improving internal processes will result in partnerships that will allow NSF to maximize the scientific, economic, and societal impacts of its investments.

Leadership & Implementation Team

Goal Structure and Strategies



The 2020-2021 APG is aligned to and will be achieved through integration with NSF's focus on expanding and deepening public and private partnerships under the broader agency-wide Renewing NSF effort. A Partnerships Goal Team was formed in 2020 Q1 and charged to execute all elements of the APG. The Goal Team provides coordination across the three key components to achieve desired outcomes through the activation of smaller implementation teams, as needed, tasked and empowered with developing the deliverables identified as key milestones. Components include improving internal and external communication, implementing process improvements, and conducting strategic outreach.

Summary of Progress – FY 2020 Q3

- Component 1, communications: Established an implementation team to inform website design process. New IT staff has been hired to support and the website design process has begun. Tentative dates set to begin Directorate Advisory Committee briefings in Q1 of FY 2021.
- Component 2, process improvements: The initial draft of the counting manual and final draft of the guiding principles document have been completed. Smaller implementation teams continue to work on completing an MOU-builder resource, and completing the counting manual. Initial work to establish a Community of Practice for Partnerships has also begun.
- Component 3, outreach: Completed initial draft of Landscape Study.

Key Milestones

Component 1. Improve Internal and External Communications

To increase awareness about NSF’s public and private partnerships, NSF will improve communication with NSF staff and with the public.

These efforts to engage NSF staff, agency advisory committees, and other stakeholders will increase awareness about NSF’s partnership strategy, policy, and resources. Additional efforts are likely to include the development of resources to inform federal agencies, industry, and non-profits about how to partner with NSF; and an updated public-facing partnerships website to inform the public about NSF’s partnership activities, including the value proposition for such activities.

Milestones of support for Component 1 may include:

Milestone Summary					
Milestone	Deadline	Status	Change from previous quarter	Owner	Notes
Develop an internal website which harmonizes all current internal documents related to partnerships	FY 2021 Q1	On track	Established team to inform website design process in Q3 of FY 2020. Website design process has begun.	APG Goal Leaders	Completed catalogue of partnerships materials. New IT contractor hired to support website design.
Create a suite of new training resources related to partnerships for NSF staff	FY 2021 Q2	Not started		APG Goal Leaders	
Redesign the public-facing partnerships website and establish a process for keeping these resources up to date	FY 2021 Q2	On track		OLPA	Website design consultations begun in Q2 of FY 2020. Discussions ongoing about audience, content, and format.
Provide briefings to Directorate ACs and the NSB as requested	FY 2021 Q4	On track	Tentative dates set for AC briefings in Q1 of FY 2021 (MPS - November).	APG Goal Leaders	Rescheduling underway in wake of COVID-19.
Develop materials for use by program directors during outreach activities.	FY 2021 Q3	Not started		OLPA	To be informed by Guiding Principles, Guiding Questions, and Landscape Study.

Component 2. Implement Process Improvements

To improve efficiency in initiating and maintaining partnerships, NSF will improve internal processes.

This is expected to include the creation of a suite of tools and/or documents that establish replicable procedures to identify partnerships, centralize responsibility for tracking partnerships, and streamline creation of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between NSF and partnering entities.

Milestones of support for Component 2 may include:

Milestone Summary					
Milestone	Deadline	Status	Change from previous quarter	Owner	Notes
Complete MOU Builder	FY 2020 Q4	On track	Application package (<i>documate</i>) selected and proof-of-concept test underway	DIS	Development to be informed by Guiding Questions document.
Create guiding principles document for internal use	FY 2020 Q4	On track	Final draft completed in Q3 of FY 2020	APG Goal Leaders	Finalized by NSF senior leadership in early Q4.
Create guiding questions document for internal use	FY 2021 Q1	On track		APG Goal Leaders	Initial writing team formed in Q4. Draft to be informed by Guiding Principles and MOU Builder.
Develop agency-wide standard approach for counting partnerships	FY 2020 Q4	On track	Initial draft completed in Q3 of FY 2020, with feedback from working group continuing.	APG Goal Leaders	Discussions with the NSF Budget Division to determine implementation details
Establish a community of practice around partnerships	FY 2021 Q1	On track	Planning for initial activities and recruiting interested parties underway in Q3 of FY2020	APG Goal Leaders	Initial launch expected in Q4.

Component 3. Conduct Strategic Outreach

To increase potential partners’ awareness about partnerships with NSF, NSF will conduct outreach in a strategic way.

Milestones of support for Component 3 may include:

Milestone Summary					
Milestone	Deadline	Status	Change from previous quarter	Owner	Notes
Complete landscape study of existing partnership activities and opportunities	FY 2020 Q3	Delayed	Document drafted in Q3 of FY 2020	APG Goal Leaders	Draft document to be presented to NSF senior leadership early in Q4; expected to be finalized in Q4.
Publish official issuances from NSF about potential partnership opportunities	FY 2021 Q2	Not started		OLPA	To be coordinated with the new NSF Director and informed by the Q3 NSB Vision 2030 Report.
Organize or participate in interagency and/or industry convenings about NSF partnership interests	FY 2021 Q2	On track		APG Goal Leaders	Presentation on NSF’s approach to partnerships at FC-STEM (interagency) Collaborator’s Convening Meeting, December 4, 2019.
Engage in other activities that increase awareness of NSF’s partnership interests in a sector, field, or community	FY 2021 Q3	Not started		APG Goal Leaders	

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Data Accuracy and Reliability

The National Science Foundation (NSF) collects, uses, and reports performance data on its activities to inform decisions, track progress, and meet statutory reporting requirements. Because it believes the capacity to measure performance is critical to maintaining operational effectiveness, NSF implements a process for the verification and validation (V&V) of performance measure data. This process relies on independent assessment of performance measures. The V&V assessment validates the completeness and reliability of performance information, providing a level of confidence to Congress and the public that the information is complete and reliable while also offering strong support for data-driven decision-making. NSF contracts with Nexight Group to conduct its IV&V of performance goals, including this Priority Goal.

In its Q3 report, the Nexight Team concluded that the performance measure for the APG meets the requirements of completeness and reliability. The data collection processes adhere to the five criteria (Complete, Consistent, Accurate, Timely, and Valid) and are sufficient to ensure that the results are usable. Based on its review of the entries in the Milestone Summary Tables, the Nexight Team concludes that there is sufficient evidence to consider the Q3 reported results as confirmed.

Contributing Programs

All NSF organizational units contribute to the APG activities through either the Working Group or the Community of Practice.

Stakeholder / Congressional Consultations

NSF routinely consults with stakeholders about partnerships, most regularly via FACA meetings and the National Science Board.