

**National Science Foundation**  
**Advisory Committee for Business and Operations**  
Fall 2019 Meeting

December 9-10, 2019  
Room E 3410

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**Monday, December 9, 2019**

1:00 pm      **Welcome/Introductions/Recap**  
*Co-Chairs: Chuck Grimes and Susan Sedwick*

1:15 pm      **Updates: BFA; OIRM; Budget/OLPA**  
*Presenters: Teresa Grancorvitz, BFA; Wonzie Gardner, OIRM; Caitlyn Fife, BFA; Amanda Greenwell, OLPA*

1:45 pm      **Results from the 2019 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS)**  
Review NSF's FEVS results.

*Presenter: Pat Curtin, Lauren Forgacs, OIRM*

*Discussant: John Palguta*

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) is an annual measure of NSF staff's perception of the workplace across several dimensions. Each year, all staff are invited to share their perspectives on their work unit, supervisor and leadership, and NSF culture. FEVS results are a major input into employee engagement action planning by each directorate and office. Senior leaders see the connection between engagement and productivity, willingness to change and innovate, and retention of our talent.

NSF staff are invested in the employee engagement process, as evidenced by the 71% response rate on the FEVS, compared to the government average of 43%. We have achieved four years of sustained improvement across all the engagement areas of focus – career development; performance and recognition; workload; and inclusion. In 2019, the score on the workload index (Items 9 & 10), went down one point.

OIRM continues to build out resources that support the directorates and offices as they work to improve engagement. Along with providing full transparency on all NSF FEVS results, we also have incorporated a module on effective employee engagement strategies in our Federal Supervisor training course, published a curated engagement website with resources touching many topics, facilitated a managers' brownbag discussion on employee morale and engagement, and are providing consulting support to the directorates and offices.

Committee Action/Feedback:

1. What promising practices have you seen organizations like NSF use to sustain incremental improvements in engagement over time, or to stimulate more significant boosts to engagement?
2. NSF has a workforce with a diverse set of people and life experiences. How have you seen organizations successfully integrate STEM and non-STEM staff working side-by-side on the same mission?
3. NSF has made progress on improving methods to help NSF staff deal with their workload. However, NSF still sees a need to help staff better manage their growing workload given current resources, time, new technology, etc. In today's climate of "do more with less", how have you seen organizations or workforces successfully deal with increasing workplace demands when staff already see their workload as being difficult to complete?

2:30 pm      **Balancing Mission, Risk and Compliance**  
In this session one of the authors of the recent report published by the Bipartisan Policy Center- "*Oversight Matters: Balancing Mission, Risk and Compliance*" will provide a high-level summary of the report as a framework to examine the concepts of risk, mission and compliance in the NSF context.

How can NSF create a culture that appropriately considers risk and compliance while improving NSF performance of its mission, leveraging such report recommendations as: suggesting oversight bodies spend more time on mission-related values and outcomes rather than compliance; incentivizing

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performance characterized by a risk-balanced perspective in achieving operational, compliance, and reporting objectives; and that oversight be smarter and strategic through risk-based and data-driven policies? Are there best-practice examples from committee members' institutions?

*Guest Speaker: Robert Shea, Principal, Public Sector Practice, Grant Thornton*

*Moderator: Alex Wynnyk, BFA*

*Panelists: Mark Bell, OIG; Fae Korsmo, OD*

*Discussants: John Kamensky, Doug Webster, Mike Holland*

In July 2019, the Bipartisan Policy Center's Task Force on Executive Branch Oversight published a report entitled "Oversight Matters: Balancing Mission, Risk and Compliance." One of the Task Force's members, Robert Shea, will provide an overview of the report's observations and recommendations. The Task Force examined the current state of oversight, noted effective practices, and made recommendations to help improve Federal agency focus. The Task Force suggests that agencies eliminate compliance for compliance sake and focus on risk-based, data-driven compliance policies.

NSF strives to balance its efforts dedicated to mission performance with time spent fulfilling compliance requirements related to audit and Federal regulations. This session will help inform NSF and its stakeholders on ways in which NSF could improve its capacity to focus on mission.

The report provides 11 recommendations for agency leaders, external oversight bodies (for example, inspector generals, or the Governmental Accounting Office), the Office of Management and Budget, and Congress. Key recommendations for agency leaders and external oversight bodies include;

- Agency leaders should reduce the time they spend on compliance-related activities and dedicate more time to mission performance.
- Agency leaders should consider collecting proxy or qualitative data on the cost/benefits of time spent on compliance versus performance activities.
- Agency leaders should collect more robust measures of mission performance and analyze with risk measures to better identify root causes of risk.
- Agency Leaders should consult with and seek guidance from external oversight bodies.
- Agency leaders should define and adopt cultures that report and address risk.
- External oversight bodies should refocus oversight practices to include more mission-related values and outcomes in addition to the traditional emphasis on fraud, waste, and abuse.

Committee Action/Feedback:

1. Assess the applicability of the report's recommendations in the NSF environment.
2. Gauge NSF's status against these recommendations as to where NSF is performing well and where NSF has opportunities to improve.
3. Identify areas that NSF should explore.

4:00 pm

**Break**

4:15 pm

**Preparation for Meeting with Dr. Crim**

4:30 pm

**Meeting with Dr. Crim**

5:30 pm

**Adjourn**

6:30 pm

**Dinner- Joe Theismann's**

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**Tuesday, December 10, 2019**

8:00 am      **NSF's Leadership Development Program**

*Presenters: Doug Deis, Macey Cox, Tracy Bojko, OIRM*

*Discussants: Jan Jones, Chuck Grimes*

The National Science Foundation launched the first Leadership Development Program (LDP) in more than 25 years at the agency in January 2018 and will graduate its first cohort of Aspiring Supervisors (17) and Aspiring Executives (12) on December 12, 2019. This competitive, merit-based program is designed to enhance the leadership capabilities within the Foundation through robust training opportunities, mentoring, coaching, networking, and detail assignments. This program reinforces the Foundation's commitment to developing internal leadership capability by investing in our employees and their professional development.

The NSF LDP is a strategic program designed to:

- enhance NSF's capacity to effectively lead teams and organizations;
- develop the leadership capabilities of high-potential employees for their current and potential future roles;
- strengthen NSF's internal supply of highly-qualified, diverse candidates positioned to be competitive for supervisory and executive positions; and
- expose current and future leaders to development practices and networks.

**Approach:**

The program develops cohorts of rising leaders who understand the context within which NSF operates, who develop strong connections within the Foundation and across the federal government, and who make impactful contributions to NSF's success as a high-performing federal agency. As a highly trained, vetted and engaged group, LDP participants are eager to take on formal and informal leadership roles at NSF.

**LDP Successes and Outcomes:**

- LDP participants have expanded their personal and professional networks within and outside NSF and have reported many positive results of these new connections.
- Even before completing the program, LDP participants have made measurable positive impacts on NSF, for example, through the required details:
  - Seven participants have engaged in details that cross the research directorate/operational directorate lines (e.g., OIRM-EHR, CISE-BFA), learning to work across disciplines and providing a mechanism for cross-pollination of ideas and approaches.
- Every supervisor of an LDP detailee in the first year of the program was highly positive about their contributions agreeing that their employee is gaining the skills needed to move into more advanced leadership positions.
- Participants in the program have made meaningful connections, building a strong and diverse network of trusted advisors.

While it is too early in the program to measure organizational impact, NSF will continue to monitor progress with expected impacts to include:

- Pipeline of candidates for promotion aligned with needs results in increased rate of internal hires;
- Participants begin to see themselves as change agents, with increased willingness to take risks and innovate;
- Improved morale and engagement within participant cohorts—and among those who work with them;
- Strong learning and leadership culture; and
- Strong program reputation and visibility across the federal government.

Committee Action/Feedback:

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NSF is interested in determining how to continue to support and leverage the talents of the LDP graduates and improve the program to help further its objectives. Specifically:

1. How do you identify high potential employees in the federal government?
2. What is your recommended approach for developing executive and supervisory leadership competencies for high potential leaders of a federal agency?
3. How do we ensure that we best leverage the talents of program graduates?

9:30 am

**Break**

9:45 am

**CXO Office of Tomorrow: B is for Block Chain**

Follow-on to discussion at fall 2018 meeting agenda item CFO Office of the Future with key highlights, lessons learned and accomplishments, as well as an overview of NSF interdisciplinary moves to projects leveraging distributed ledger technology (block chain).

*Presenters: Dorothy Aronson, OD; Mike Wetklow, BFA*

*Discussant: Adam Goldberg (Guest: Craig Fischer, U.S. Department of Treasury)*

Respondents will provide a brief update on the prior year session on the CFO of the Future. Since last year NSF has made progress in robotic processing automation, advancing data analytics, strategic workforce planning, and interdisciplinary management approaches. This year's session will focus and solicit guidance on our developing efforts to explore game changing distributed ledger technologies more commonly known as Blockchain.

Simplifying Identification of Overlapping & Duplicative Research: NSF is planning to leverage advanced technologies to solve a persistent challenge in the grant-making community: duplicative and overlapping research grants across science research grant-making organizations including federal agencies such as HHS, USDA, NASA, DoD. To minimize duplication and overlap of the research grants, we will apply emerging technologies such as advanced analytics working on top of a Blockchain infrastructure to build a "Grants Community Blockchain" (GCB). The GCB network will provide instantaneous notification to participating organizations about proposal information determined to be the most valuable for sharing across participating organizations by comparing "proposal fingerprints".

This we successfully built the fingerprint: the key "block" in the "chain" and proved that comparing fingerprints reveals overlapping proposals. In doing so we "liberated" this proposal data while at the same time protecting proposal contents including intellectual property of merit and sensitive information.

Even without the full GCB built, we now have tools that will be used to simplify detection of possible duplicate requests. With the GCB in place, all participating agencies will reap the benefit of this advancement.

Reducing Burdens of Letter of Credit Processes and Systems: NSF recently launched a Federal Demonstration Project with the research community to quantify the workload burden of using multiple letter of credit drawdown systems. In addition, Treasury and NSF is working on a research and development project (i.e., proof of concept) to understand if a blockchain based payment request application offers any benefits for 1) increasing payment efficiency and transparency for sub-recipient payments; and/or 2) reducing prime and sub-recipient reporting for Federal payments that 'pass through' multiple parties. This proof of concept is strictly a "sandbox" test and will not be integrated with any Federal system(s) nor will there be any transfer of Federal data; all data used will be fictitious and will operate within a Contractor-hosted environment.

Committee Action/Feedback:

NSF is looking for the following feedback:

1. How do we educate the community and demystify distributed ledger technologies (e.g., do we need a myth busting campaign)?

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2. How to scale the use cases, design a governance process and operationalize the tool as an innovative government-wide shared service solution.
3. How do we motivate and get the Research Community excited about this?

10:45 am

**State of the BOAC**

*Presenters: Charisse Carney-Nunes, BFA; Jeff Rich, OIRM*

*Discussants: Chuck Grimes, Susie Sedwick*

NSF is constantly evolving and so must the mission operations and support provided by the Offices of Budget, Finance and Award Management (BFA) and Information and Resource Management (OIRM).

We will review changes that have occurred in the past six years in NSF, BFA and OIRM, in areas such as budget, staffing, strategic and priority goals, and Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) scores. It is particularly important for OIRM and BFA to deliver excellent services and support to NSF even with continuous change.

The BOAC provides valuable advice for NSF/BFA/OIRM to help business operations and to meet its strategic goals. We will review advice from the BOAC over the last six years and assess examples of impacts of the advice.

With the backdrop of both past BOAC advice and the current challenges NSF faces, we look to the BOAC members, particularly those members who will be leaving the BOAC after this meeting, for their observations on serving on the BOAC the last six years and how these learnings can maximize the impact of the BOAC and further improve NSF business operations.

**Committee Action/Feedback:**

We will pose the following questions first to the departing Committee members and then to the members at-large:

1. Please answer one of two optional questions:
  - a) Look back: how far we've come and BOAC impact on NSF
  - b) Look forward: opportunities to leverage BOAC to benefit NSF/BFA/OIRM over the next 3-5 years
2. In your time on the BOAC, discuss gaps you have observed and how we may address them going forward (i.e. committee size, scope, skill sets, diversity of topics presented, etc.)

11:45 am

**CEOSE Update**

12:00 pm

**Committee Business/Wrap Up – Adjourn**