

**National Science Foundation
Advisory Committee for Business and Operations
Executive Summary for Spring Meeting
May 19-20, 2009**

On behalf of the Advisory Committee for Business and Operations, this serves as an Executive Summary of our findings and recommendations for the spring Committee meeting held at the National Science Foundation on May 19-20, 2009.

Finalized on June 30, 2009

Mary Ellen Sheridan
Co-Chair

Tom Kirk
Co-Chair

Committee members in attendance:

Jake Barkdoll	Consultant
Charlene Hayes	Johns Hopkins University
Philip Joyce	George Washington University
Tom Kirk	Brookhaven National Laboratory (retired)
Sally Marshall	Human Resource Solutions
Kathryn Newcomer	George Washington University
Mort Rahimi	Northwestern University
Gloria Rogers	ABET, Inc.
Dick Seligman	California Institute of Technology
Mary Ellen Sheridan	University of Chicago (retired)
Mildred Smalley	Southern University and A&M College (retired)
E. Jennings Taylor	Faraday Technology
Cynthia White	Belmont University
Don Worden	Training Consultant

Committee members absent:

Mike Gooden	Integrated Systems Analysts, Inc
Mark Luker	
Katy Schmoll	University Corporation for Atmospheric Research

Meeting commenced at 1:00 pm on, May 19, 2009

CIO (Chief Information Officer) Updates

Dr. George Strawn, CIO, conducted a general talk about open access to scholarly publications and communications and its impact on NSF (in next 5 years), looking at how publishers and NSF will respond to open access. He will update the B&O on cloud computing next fall; several agencies in government are beginning to adopt. He also discussed distinguishing between current NSF policies and his observations of the industry.

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OIRM (Office of Information and Resource Management) Updates

Anthony Arnolie, Director of OIRM and Chief Human Capital Officer, provided updates on several topics:

Federal Human Capital Survey 2008

- 55% response rate; generally positive responses
- Leadership and Knowledge Management - ranked #2 in government
- Results-Oriented - ranked #1, Talent Management - #2, Job Satisfaction #3
- For 2009 we are #5 out of 30 for Best Places to Work by Partnership for Public Service (for the Small Agencies) – NSF has been in the top 5 for past 3 or so years.

Customer Satisfaction Survey (internal on our provided services; 5th year for OIRM)

- Building and Infrastructure/IT Services/HR Areas all improved scores
- Not purely scientific data, but helps prioritize our focus and outreach

Panelist Survey

- Developed survey to obtain feedback relating to experience prior to and while at NSF. So far have about 4000 results; consistently high
- Validated and confirmed what we thought the experiences of our panelists were.

NEXt Program- Resources that would be most beneficial to incoming executive

The Committee viewed the New Employee Orientation Video with much positive feedback.

Recommendations:

- The Committee recommends that NSF leadership make transparent what the consequences of not increasing staffing levels will be in terms of achievement of mission-driven goals in the next three years.
- The Committee also recommends that OIRM continue its strategic planning efforts to clarify what will be needed to support an aggressive federal investment in Research and Development beyond current ARRA funding.

BFA (Office of Budget, Finance and Award Management) Updates

Tom Cooley, BFA Director and Chief Financial Officer, presented information on activities in BFA:

New Administration

- About open access and our policies/procedures/standard operating guidance
- Transparency/accountability

External Initiatives: Grants Policy Committee/Grants Executive Board

- Integration across federal government; NSF as experimental testbed
- Next release of sites like Grants.gov to improve future capacity and capability
- How do we manage the community's expectations?

NSF Budget FY09 & FY10 Request

- Business case is to increase volume and bring cost down.
- Very low overhead (this year will be 3-4%).

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ARRA

- MRI + ARI + EPSCoR + new master's program are only new solicitations
- Impact to staff and reviewer committee will be tremendous

Policy Updates

- NSF has been fortunate to be involved in many cross-Agency initiatives
- Helping to define the "buy America" provision in the context of grants; influencing policy and decisions and OMB circulars

BFA Human Capital Plan Update- Convincing OMB and Congress that we need staff

FY09 Financial Statement Audit & A-123 Internal Controls

FAS Update / iTrak Modernization

- FAS is 25 years old; need to meet new system requirements

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act NSF Implementation

Tom Cooley presented the following information on the NSF implementation of the Recovery Act:

- All funds must be obligated by September 30, 2010. NSF expects that about 60% - 80% of the funds will be obligated by September 30, 2009 and that virtually all the remaining funds will be obligated by June 30, 2010; awardees have 5 years to spend the funds once they are received.
- Awards made with Recovery Act funds will have additional Terms and Conditions.
- The Recovery Act has a number of reporting and accountability requirements. NSF must submit 2 types of weekly reports; we developed Agency and Program Specific Plans.
- Congressional interest in where the funds are going (by district and by State) is high.
- Recovery Act funds "free up" regular appropriations for awards that are prohibited by the Act.
- The Recovery Act implementation has raised some NSF policy issues that may have implications for NSF in a larger context – for example reversal of decline.
- Award recipients will be required to report quarterly (not to NSF) about expenditure of ARRA funds; first reports will be due on October 10, 2009.

Recommendations:

- Use the opportunity presented by ARRA to continue taking the lead among the research and development agencies to set the standard for grants management as NSF has done with FastLane and Research.gov
- Continue to streamline the grants administration process as it has already done with reforms in financial reporting processes and cost sharing requirements and procedures
- Recognize that the ARRA quarterly reporting process is in its infancy; rigorously review and analyze the quarterly reporting data and the manner of its collection and submission so that it can be continuously refined and made more useful
- Focus its efforts on the "reinvestment" aspects of ARRA. NSF's approach to ARRA implementation and its historic mission position the Foundation to significantly contribute to reinvestment in the long term R & D capacity of the United States; this may well have a more long-lasting impact than the "recovery" aspects of NSF's ARRA actions
- Strenuously resist attempts by other parts of the federal government to micromanage the federal grants administration process

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Research.Gov Updates

Andrea Norris and Mary Santonastasso provided updates on Research.gov.

Key Facts:

- The Recovery Act has presented NSF with an opportunity that should be taken advantage of – the ability to initiate a new Research.gov
- NSF has indicated to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that we will rely on FastLane for NSF proposals and pursue the feasibility of building an APPLY capability in Research.gov
- A proposal to NSF can be submitted through FastLane or through Grants.gov – though only about 3% of NSF proposal submissions come through Grants.gov
- NSF's first priority is to replace FastLane
- NSF would look into provisions of the ability to provide progress reports
- OMB has approved a pilot using the GSA FedBizOpps solution for FIND and APPLY – but this system is a procurement system rather than one geared to research grants
- NSF believes it will take 9-12 months to implement a functioning service focused on the research grant community

Over the long-term horizon, NSF will deliver a new "Application Preparation and Submission" capability in Research.gov to support NSF needs as well as other research agencies that may be interested in using the service to support their research constituents. In the development phase, NSF is committed to leveraging the experience of those institutions who have developed System to System capabilities as their preferred method for interacting with grantor agencies.

The Committee endorsed this plan and recommended that:

- NSF pay particular attention to communication and coordination with the research community to assure that NSF plans are clear.
- NSF should leverage institution investments in software to integrate with Grants.gov in any new Research.gov service.

In the short term, the Recovery Act is challenging the ability of Grants.gov to handle the increased proposal load. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has instructed Federal grant-making agencies to use alternative methods for accepting grant applications during the Recovery Act's expected peak period to reduce demand on Grants.gov's limited resources. NSF is supportive of OMB's directive and will rely on FastLane for NSF proposals during this time period. NSF will continue to monitor this situation, which will hopefully result in robust proposal submission mechanisms for all of the Foundation's constituencies.

Future NSF--2013 Lease Expiration

The lease for the current NSF buildings expires in the December 2013. Mignon Anthony and Pat Bryant provided background and updates as to the current effort leading up to this key decision point.

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Key facts:

- New lease will be awarded in 2011.
- Total cost to complete effort is in the \$85 million range.
- NSF has been and will be working hand-in-hand with the General Services Administration (GSA) on communication of status and issues as well as providing all required business cases.

NSF charged the Committee with the following questions:

- How important is the NSF headquarters building to the impression that the external community has about the agency? What should that impression be?
- What are the most important expectations for NSF to fulfill in dealing with our science and engineering community peers as it relates to NSF's facilities, technology and operations?
- What ideas, benchmarks or thoughts of significance might this body have to offer NSF for consideration during this process?

The Committee has the following recommendations:

- Consider teleworking and how it will impact space considerations.
- Consider panel locations outside of NSF headquarters, including regional sites and video conferencing solutions.
- Implement surveys asking for employee feedback on the possible locations of NSF after the current lease expires, asking directly for behavioral intentions, e.g., early retirements, given different locations.
- Consider the building facility convey science, including the facility's look and feel.

Committee Discussion with NSF Acting Deputy Director, Dr. Cora Marrett

The Committee discussed four important topic areas with Dr. Marrett. Please see the individual topics above as well as the summary dated 6/12/09 for details and recommendations.

- ARRA reporting: Dr. Marrett stressed that NSF is open to Committee inputs to streamline the process.
- Research.gov: Dr. Marrett noted that NSF should continue to reassure the research community that it is not undermining the Federal effort to have one grants portal and is working towards that goal.
- Executive transition/training: NSF is always open to improve the performance of management. Through recruitment and training, NSF can address the needs to further refine and improve management performance.
- 2013 lease expiration: Dr. Marrett encouraged discussion with NSF staff about needs for NSF's site in 2013. The discussion should then proceed to the National Science Board.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm on May 20, 2009