

STATUS REPORT ON FY 2010-2011 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

FY 2010 and FY 2011 will be transitional years for performance assessment and reporting at NSF. A number of recent developments and ongoing activities directly affect both NSF's current and future approach to these activities.

- The NSF Strategic Plan is being updated for FY 2011 to FY 2017. The new plan is expected to be completed by the summer of 2010.
- New approaches and methods are now available for assessing the performance of NSF's investments in science and engineering research and education. Many of these new approaches draw upon work supported by the NSF program in the Science of Science and Innovation Policy (SciSIP).
- NSF is also addressing recommendations from the FY 2009 report of the Advisory Committee for GPRA Performance Assessment (AC/GPA). The committee specifically examined alternative methods alternative approaches to performance assessment at NSF, and it recommended that NSF *"consider an assessment framework that uses multiple measures and methods, applied over various time scales."*

In light of these developments, a number of changes are already underway in FY 2010. Of particular note is that in FY 2010 NSF is employing a simplified and streamlined performance framework to meet the assessment and reporting requirements established by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). This framework is presented in the next section of this chapter.

In addition, NSF is pursuing a number of activities to pilot and review new approaches to the assessment and evaluation of NSF's programs. These activities will be pursued in conjunction with the update of the NSF Strategic Plan. Examples of these activities include:

- The STAR METRICS project (Science and Technology in America's Reinvestment – Measuring the Effect of Research on Innovation, Competitiveness and Science). NSF is working with OSTP and other agencies of the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) to develop a data-driven analytical capability for assessing impacts of federal investments in science and engineering research and education. For additional information, please see the Integrative Activities chapter.
- Initial planning activities related to establishing an NSF-wide capability for assessment and evaluation, as requested in FY 2011 under Agency Operations and Award Management. This centralized capability would bring greater attention and analysis to such areas as comparing different types of programmatic investments and identifying the most effective means for continuous improvement across the NSF portfolio. This effort is part of the Administration's government-wide initiative to build capacity within agencies to strengthen their program evaluation. NSF's development plan was approved by the Office of Management and Budget for FY 2011, and NSF will work with evaluation experts at OMB and the Council of Economic Advisers during the planning, design, and implementation stages.
- The continued development of goals and metrics for activities under the NSF learning portfolio.

NSF will also continue to engage external experts in keeping with the recent work of the AC/GPA on improving the NSF performance framework. Issues and questions likely to be addressed include:

- Which emerging approaches and methods provide the most useful insights into the performance of NSF's investments?

- What considerations should be incorporated into the new Strategic Plan to encourage the appropriate implementation of these new approaches?
- What key factors should be considered as NSF develops an agency-wide capability for evaluation and assessment?

The results of these FY 2010 activities will help to determine the NSF performance framework for FY 2011 and future years.