

## **Outreach to NSF Staff and External Stakeholders about NSF Strategic Plan- Preliminary Analysis from Draft Summary**

### **Major Themes**

#### Transformative Research

Respondents urged caution in the use of the term “potentially transformative research,” noting that it is hard to define or identify and that truly transformative research occurs very rarely.

#### Interdisciplinary Research

There is praise about the emphasis given to interdisciplinary research, as well as questions and suggestions on how to support and assess it.

#### STEM Education and Workforce

A considerable number of responders urge increased focus on STEM education and workforce. Suggestions range from increased leadership to increased support for STEM education at earlier ages to broadening participation of underrepresented groups in STEM education and in the STEM professions at all levels.

#### Partnerships (Interagency, International, Industry/Private Sector)

For a truly effective partnership strategy that allows American researchers to partner with the best in the world, the Foundation should strive to ensure that both domestic and international partnerships are as accessible as possible within the constraints of NSF's statutes. Given the global nature of science, now, international partnering received the most attention, but the importance of collaboration with other U.S. agencies and with businesses was also stressed.

#### Broadening Participation

The need for increased participation by underrepresented groups in STEM was a repeated theme. Sectors mentioned included STEM education at the undergraduate and graduate levels, the STEM workforce, and senior scientists at NSF. Broadened participation is mentioned as an issue of equity, as a way to ease anxiety about foreign competition, and a way of maintaining the U.S. leadership role in STEM.

#### Leadership

There are continued exhortations to provide leadership rather than mere support to various specific efforts.

### **Specific Parts of the Revised Strategic Plan**

Vision – Two reviewers, one of them external, commented on the lack of excitement connected to science. Several also commented that the vision statement seems more appropriate for the nation rather than the NSF.

Planning in a Dynamic Environment – There is concern that the paragraph on the STEM workforce needs to be expanded, which echoes many comments urging increased emphasis on STEM education, training and workforce development in various places throughout the revised Strategic Plan. Several reviewers suggested addressing the ethical conduct of research and sustainability in this section. An external reviewer commented that the changes brought about by the new social infrastructure on the Web, and “open” content need additional attention.

Strategic Goals – Some reviewers find the three strategies clear, others find them confusing and “jargon-y.” “Transform the Frontiers” drew contradictory statements about integration of research and education. Several reviewers questioned whether “Perform as a Model Organization” was an appropriate strategic goal on par with the first two. However, the content of the goal seems to receive support.

Long-Term Performance Goals – Many reviewers commented on topics that fit into the long-performance goals. In Transform the Frontiers: Many comments focus on “potentially transformative research,” either recommending caution, expressing skepticism about the value of the term, or asking for examples. Many reviewers want to see more on international partnership and collaboration. In Innovate for Society: Several reviewers requested an increased emphasis on collaboration with the private sector. In Perform as a Model Organization, most comments were congratulatory.

Strategies and Means – “Broaden Participation” received numerous comments, mostly requesting more, or suggesting specific areas of emphasis.

Evaluations and Assessments – Several comments mentioned the need for more and different ways to evaluate and assess, and welcomed the focus on new approaches.

Appendix – Reviewers welcomed the inclusion of the Appendix and the indicators, and many wished to see further development of this section.

Job Performance – Among the comments of twenty-eight respondents who elaborated on how the revised Strategic Plan would change their job performance, a common theme appeared to be the development of the performance goals, combined with indicators and the emphasis on assessment, would help guide performance, and/or require more time spent on assessment and evaluation. Several mentioned positively the emphasis on improved organizational operations and staff development.

Those who felt the revised Strategic Plan would not change how they performed their job indicated generally that it did not change their perceptions of NSF or their job descriptions.