

BFA Updates May 2008 ~ Supplemental Information

Stewardship Strategic Outcome Goal

- FY 2007: NSF achieved the Stewardship Goal. Detailed results were published in the FY 2009 NSF Budget Request to Congress and on the Performance website: <http://www.nsf.gov/about/performance/>
- FY 2008: New measures and milestones were established based on what we learned in FY 2007 and on new priorities for FY 2008.
- The performance areas under the Stewardship goal are monitored by the Foundation-wide Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Working Group and quarterly reports are sent to NSF Senior Management.

Changes in Performance Reporting for FY 2007

- NSF participated in OMB's "Performance and Accountability Report (PAR) Pilot" Program, which permitted agencies to publish their performance results in their annual budget requests to Congress (released in February 2008) and not in their Annual Financial Report (AFR), released on November 15, 2007.
- Thus, NSF's FY 2007 Stewardship goal results were published in the performance information chapter of the NSF FY 2009 Budget Request to Congress, released on February 4, 2008.
- However, a *summary* of Stewardship results was included in our AFR chapter on "Management's Discussion and Analysis."
- NSF published its Performance Highlights report on February 1, 2008, three days before the release of the President's budget.
- The advantage to the PAR Pilot for NSF was that it gave us more time to collect and analyze the results of the performance goals and to integrate them into the annual budget, which is our annual performance plan.
- Links to all of NSF's performance results are accessible through the B&O website page on relevant publications: <http://www.nsf.gov/oirm/bocomm/links.jsp>

Changes in Performance Reporting for FY 2008

- The FY 2008 Performance Highlights report will become the Citizen's Report: the FY 2008 Summary of Performance and Financial Results and will be published no later than January 15, 2009.
- NSF will continue to participate in the PAR Pilot, publishing the FY 2008 Results of performance goals in the budget request to Congress (date TBD).

Federal Financial Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA)

- "Google for Government Spending" requires Federal government to create and maintain publicly available online database about entities that have Federal awards.
- The first part of FFATA mandate was met on January 1, 2008, when the *USASpending.gov* website was launched. It provides information on every grant and contract made by the U.S. Government.

- The law requires that information on subawards be made available to the public by January 1, 2009. An interagency taskforce is working with a pilot program planned for this summer.
- To comply with FFATA, grant and contract proposers must have a valid DUNS number. During the registration process, the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) is used to verify the organization's DUNS number. The *NSF Grant Proposal Guide* was updated on the January 5, 2008 to alert all proposers and known subawardees that they must be registered in the CCR prior to submitting a proposal to NSF.

Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP)

- Purpose: identifying ways to reduce administrative burdens associated with Federal research grants and contracts
- NSF has relied on FDP community for
 - help implementing electronic signatures
 - improving project reporting system
 - providing feedback on new policies
- The Federal Register Notice and solicitation to participate in Phase V of the FDP was posted January 31, 2008. Deadline for applications was April 1, 2008.

BFA Performance Management Goals

- BFA manages the NSF-wide clearance process for program solicitations, Memorandum Of Understanding (MOUs), *Dear Colleague* letters, brochures, etc.
 - An analysis of baseline data is underway to determine the time-to-clearance and relevant causal factors .
 - Analytic findings will be basis for setting FY 2009 metrics; a tracking system is being developed for monitoring performance.
 - This effort responds to concerns identified in analysis of BFA-related comments to the OIRM Customer Support Survey.
- BFA is developing a coordinated, "internal outreach" training effort
 - Goal is to enhance NSF staff's organizational understanding and interconnectedness of critical program and administrative functions/goals as related to award policy
 - Strategy is to utilize complementary modes of face-to-face and on-line resources
 - Developing quarterly seminar on the foundation for NSF policy
 - Developing pilot training modules designed to highlight specific NSF processes enabling staff to navigate targeted areas of NSF proposal and award policy
 - Assists in addressing BFA-related comments made in OIRM Customer Support Survey

Research Business Models (RBM)

- Federal cross-agency coordination to address policy implications
- Outreach with FDP, National Council of University Research Administrators, Council On Government Relations, Society of Research Administrators, and others continues
- Likely to have additional regional public meetings, possibly in conjunction with GPC and Grants.gov
- Current activities
 - Multiple PIs
 - Research Terms and Conditions (expansion of the FDP terms and conditions. The Research T&Cs will be published this Summer and will replace the FDP T&Cs and the NSF Grant General Conditions)
 - Research Performance Progress Report (currently analyzing numerous comments submitted to the Federal Register notice on this topic)
 - Conflict of Interest Policy
 - Voluntary Institutional compliance Program Guidance
 - Enhanced A-133 compliance supplement on sub-recipient monitoring

Post-Award Administration

- Reportable condition on grants post-award administration was downgraded to a management challenge at the conclusion of the FY 2007 audit
- Advances in post-award financial/administrative monitoring ensure NSF's stewardship over taxpayer investments
- Award Monitoring and Business Assistance Program (AMBAP), now fully implemented, serves as a standard of excellence across the Federal government
 - Risk-based assessment covers over 90% of NSF award dollars containing costs while ensuring greater oversight of NSF's nearly 3,000 awardees
 - 30 site visits per year are made by NSF staff to institutions managing the most high risk awards; 150 desk reviews per year are conducted by contractors under NSF supervision
 - Follow-up activities related to site visits and desk reviews have been established and are now implemented; standard operating guidance (SOG) protocols and templates ensure consistent, comprehensive information
 - AMBAP policies and procedures are updated and enhanced on an annual basis.
- Future plans: Expanded implementation of follow-up activities; continued analysis of institutional surveys leading to further refinement of AMBAP activities

Audit Resolution

- On May 12, 2008, the OIG officially announced its intent to audit NSF's Audit Resolution Process to determine the adequacy of process controls and whether controls are followed in an effective and timely manner
- NSF is participating in an OMB interagency work group to re-write OMB Audit Follow-up Circular A-50

- Intent is to clarify resolution for different report categories, e.g., performance audits, financial statement audits, investigative reviews, OIG external audits, and GAO audits
- Important to NSF is obtaining a better definition of the “cognizant agency” concept in order to obtain clarity for resolution of cross-cutting findings issued by OIGs of non-cognizant agencies

Project Reporting System

- Web-based project reporting and notification system incorporated into FastLane (November 2006)
- Business rules reflecting policies incorporated into back office IT systems (i.e., blocks funding and administrative award actions when reports are overdue)
- Recent or pending enhancements:
 - Postdoctoral fellowship reporting requirement implemented March 9, 2008
 - Requirement for Presidential Mentoring Awards being considered

Grants Management Line of Business (GMLoB)

- 26 participating grants-making agencies manage over 150 back-office systems, 900 programs, and \$525 billion in federal financial assistance. GMLoB strategy:
- GMLoB partnering agencies responded to OMB milestones:
 - At the end of the first quarter of FY 2008, agencies established an MOU with one of three Consortia Leads (CLs)—NSF, DoED, ACF/HHS—or submitted an appeal to OMB.
 - At the end of the second quarter of FY 2008, agencies submitted implementation plan strategies for partnering with their CL or moving forward on their OMB-approved alternative solution.
- As a CL, NSF is developing a module-based *Research.gov* that will serve as the next generation of FastLane; partners include DoD research agencies, NASA, and USDA (Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service).
- Next steps include work with partnering agencies on implementation, continued development of government-wide standards, outreach to federal agencies and the community.

America COMPETES Act (HR 2272); Passed August 9, 2007

- Shares goals of American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI) with focus on:
 - Research investment (physical sciences & applied energy research)
 - STEM educational opportunities (K thru post doc)
 - Development of innovative infrastructure
- Proposed doubling of NSF funding from \$5.6 to \$11.2 billion, FY 2006-2011
- Mandatory provisions for NSF have potentially large impact on BFA divisions and the awardee community. At the end of CY 2007, the CFO alerted the Senior Management Advisory Roundtable (SMaRT) of the impact of ACA, but informed them that NSF had not yet implemented provisions.

- Numerous provisions with significant policy-related implications including reinstating mandatory cost sharing for the Major Research Instrumentation Program (solicitation issued Fall 2007) and programs with industrial partners
- In February 2008, NSB submitted mandatory report to Congress on its evaluation of the impact of eliminating cost-share; BFA assisted with development of the NSB report. Report recommends reinstatement of cost share for EPSCoR, Engineering Research Centers (ERCs) and Industry University Cooperative Research Centers (I/UCRCs) programs
- Two one-day cost sharing roundtables with outside experts are scheduled for July 2008 and a more extensive Board report to Congress will be submitted in the Fall.
- The internal NSF policy working group is actively working on solutions to address other requirements:
 - All proposals that provide support for postdoctoral researchers must describe the mentoring activities that will be provided. The mentoring activities are to be evaluated under NSF's broader impacts merit review criterion. The mentoring activities must also be described in annual and final project reports
 - All proposals for financial assistance from NSF must include institutional plans for providing appropriate training and oversight in the responsible and ethical conduct of research to undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers participating in the proposed research project
 - Reporting of research results and requirement that final project reports be made publicly available.
 - See attached status update on NSF implementation of Section 7009

Merit Review Web site

- This website puts a public face on NSF's merit review process, making the federal "gold standard" fully transparent
 - Answers how reviewers are selected; who makes funding decisions; how long it takes to make funding decisions; what information PIs receive
 - See <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/meritreview/>
- A complementary internal merit review website is in final stages of development. The website will be used by NSF staff and focuses on roles and responsibilities, a best practices forum and FAQs

Transformative Research

- Last Fall, the NSB approved a motion by Dr. Bement to increase support for transformative research and to incorporate it into the intellectual merit review criterion
- Characteristics of transformative research (TR) are that it:
 - Challenges conventional wisdom
 - Leads to unexpected insights that enable new techniques or methodologies

- Redefines boundaries of science, engineering, or education.
- Effective January 5, 2008, the *GPG* implements TR and the intellectual merit review criterion now specifically addresses potentially transformative concepts.
- The TR initiative also proposes modifications to the SGER (Small Grants for Exploratory Research) award mechanism. The two-part replacement mechanisms include: Early-Concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER) and Grants for Rapid Response Research (RAPID). More information on TR and EAGER/RAPID will be provided in the next release of the GPG.

In-reach Activities

- Increased effort is being placed on providing training and updates to internal NSF staff on the core functions of BFA, giving staff the information needed to perform their jobs more effectively
- Examples of in-reach activities include:
 - Briefing for the Program Support Managers (PSMs) and Operations Specialists (OSs) on how NSF policy is developed
 - Presentation to the Administrative Managers Group (AMG) on the roles and responsibilities of the Policy Office
 - Briefing to AMG on FFATA