



Agency Priority Goal Action Plan

Developing an Agency-Wide Partnerships Strategy

Goal Leaders:

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Overview

Goal Statement

- Strategically engage in public and private partnerships to enhance the impact of NSF's investments and contribute to American economic competitiveness and security. To benefit the U.S. scientific and engineering research and education enterprise, by September 30, 2021, NSF will develop and pursue an agency-wide partnerships strategy, components of which include targeted outreach, implementation of process improvements, and improvement of internal and external communications.

Challenge

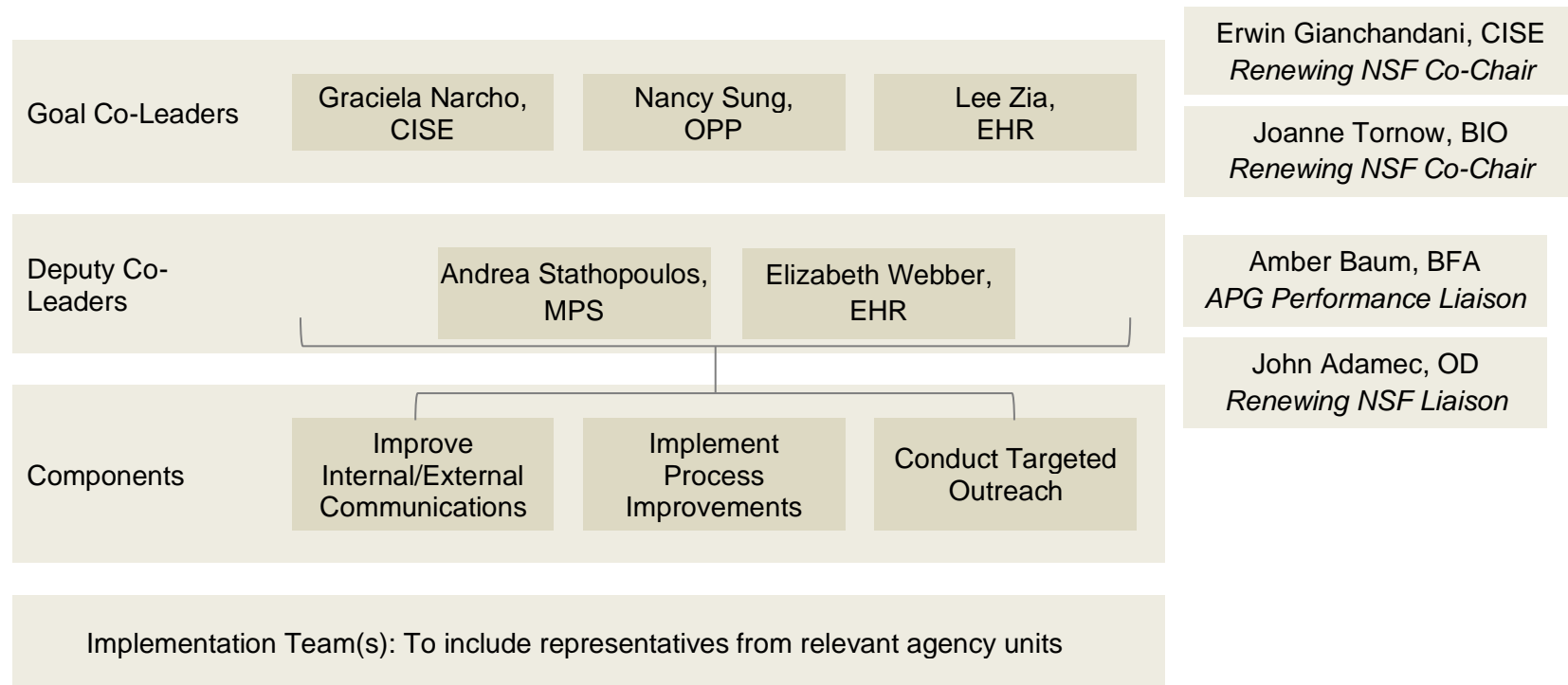
- NSF is a sought-after partner and the range of partnership opportunities present different needs, goals, and priorities. Developing partnerships requires significant time and intellectual capital, as well as strategic foresight.
- Assessing and prioritizing partnership opportunities often happens at the directorate/office level. Efficiencies could be better realized through greater harmonization across the agency.

Opportunity

- Private industry, foundations, and non-profits, together with other federal agencies and international funding organizations, bring additional expertise, resources, and capacity to NSF-funded research. Consequently, pursuing partnership opportunities in a strategic and coordinated manner will allow NSF to accelerate discovery and translation of research to products and services, and enhances preparation of the future workforce to benefit society and grow the American economy.
- Developing a consistent agency-wide partnerships strategy and improving internal processes will result in partnerships that will allow NSF to maximize the scientific, economic, and societal impacts of its investments.

Leadership & Implementation Team

Goal Structure and Strategies



The 2020-2021 APG is aligned to and will be achieved through integration with NSF's focus on expanding and deepening public and private partnerships under the broader agency-wide Renewing NSF effort. A Partnerships Goal Team was formed in 2020 Q1 and charged to execute all elements of the APG. The Goal Team provides coordination across the three key components to achieve desired outcomes through the activation of smaller implementation teams, as needed, tasked and empowered with developing the deliverables identified as key milestones. Components include improving internal and external communication, implementing process improvements, and conducting strategic outreach.

Summary of Progress – FY 2020 Q4

- Component 1, communications: The **internal website** design process continues--IT staff have built the frame for the site based on input from the implementation team. The implementation team anticipates work on **content** to progress in FY 2021 Q1. A **draft partnerships presentation** is under development with modules for interagency, international, industry, and non-profits that can be used in internal and external engagement activities. Tentative dates set to begin directorate **Advisory Committee briefings** in Q1 of FY 2021.
- Component 2, process improvements: **Guiding Principles document** finalized by NSF senior leadership. Smaller implementation teams continue to work on completing an **MOU Builder** resource, drafting a **Guiding Questions document** and reviewing the **Counting Manual** draft. A **Community of Practice** for Partnerships has been established and monthly meetings are underway.
- Component 3, outreach: **Landscape Study** finalized by NSF senior leadership. **Conversations** with other agencies have begun including NIH, NASA, and DOE.

Key Milestones

Component 1. Improve Internal and External Communications

To increase awareness about NSF's public and private partnerships, NSF will improve communication with NSF staff and with the public.

These efforts to engage NSF staff, agency advisory committees, and other stakeholders will increase awareness about NSF's partnership strategy, policy, and resources. Additional efforts are likely to include the development of resources to inform federal agencies, industry, and non-profits about how to partner with NSF; and an updated public-facing partnerships website to inform the public about NSF's partnership activities, including the value proposition for such activities.

Milestones of support for Component 1 may include:

Milestone Summary					
Milestone	Deadline	Status	Change from previous quarter	Owner	Notes
Develop an internal website which harmonizes all current internal documents related to partnerships	FY 2021 Q1	On track	Website design process continues.	APG Goal Leaders	IT contractors have built the site and implementation team anticipates adding content in FY 2021 Q1.
Create a suite of new training resources related to partnerships for NSF staff	FY 2021 Q2	Not started	Draft presentation with modules under development.	APG Goal Leaders	Modules to include: interagency, international, industry, and non-profits.
Redesign the public-facing partnerships website and establish a process for keeping these resources up to date	FY 2021 Q2	On track		OLPA	Website design consultations begun in Q2 of FY 2020. Discussions ongoing about audience, content, and format.
Provide briefings to Directorate ACs and the NSB as requested	FY 2021 Q4	Not started	Rescheduling continues in wake of COVID-19.	APG Goal Leaders	Exploring setting dates for AC briefings in FY 2021.
Develop materials for use by program directors during outreach activities.	FY 2021 Q3	On track		OLPA	To be informed by Guiding Principles, Guiding Questions, and Landscape Study.

Key Milestones

Component 2. Implement Process Improvements

To improve efficiency in initiating and maintaining partnerships, NSF will improve internal processes.

This is expected to include the creation of a suite of tools and/or documents that establish replicable procedures to identify partnerships, centralize responsibility for tracking partnerships, and streamline creation of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between NSF and partnering entities.

Milestones of support for Component 2 may include:

Milestone Summary					
Milestone	Deadline	Status	Change from previous quarter	Owner	Notes
Complete MOU Builder	FY 2020 Q4	Delayed, expected FY 2021 Q2	Proposed system proof-of-concept successfully completed in Q4. Acquisition underway.	DIS	Q4 contractor onboarding delays now resolved.
Create guiding principles document for internal use	FY 2020 Q4	Complete	Finalized by NSF senior leadership.	APG Goal Leaders	Final draft completed in Q3 of FY 2020.
Create guiding questions document for internal use	FY 2021 Q1	On track	Implementation team in place. Draft under development and expected to inform MOU Builder.	APG Goal Leaders	Draft is being informed by input from Community of Practice.
Develop agency-wide standard approach for counting partnerships	FY 2020 Q4	Delayed, expected FY 2021 Q1	Draft under review by working group. Completing discussions to finalize implementation details.	APG Goal Leaders	Testing planned in Q1 of FY 2021 to produce the inventory of FY 2020 partnerships.
Establish a community of practice around partnerships	FY 2021 Q1	Complete	Launched in Q4 of FY 2020. Two meetings held and included representatives from all directorates.	APG Goal Leaders	Internal collaboration site created to disseminate products (e.g., Guiding Principles and Landscape Study).

Key Milestones

Component 3. Conduct Strategic Outreach

To increase potential partners' awareness about partnerships with NSF, NSF will conduct outreach in a strategic way.

Milestones of support for Component 3 may include:

Milestone Summary					
Milestone	Deadline	Status	Change from previous quarter	Owner	Notes
Complete landscape study of existing partnership activities and opportunities	FY 2020 Q3	Complete	Approved in FY 2020 Q4	APG Goal Leaders	Document going through final clearance for posting on external website.
Publish official issuances from NSF about potential partnership opportunities	FY 2021 Q2	Not started		OLPA	To be coordinated with the new NSF Director and informed by the Q3 NSB Vision 2030 Report.
Organize or participate in interagency and/or industry convenings about NSF partnership interests	FY 2021 Q2	On track	Conversations with other agencies have begun including NIH, NASA, and DOE.	APG Goal Leaders	
Engage in other activities that increase awareness of NSF's partnership interests in a sector, field, or community	FY 2021 Q3	Not started		APG Goal Leaders	

Data Accuracy and Reliability

The National Science Foundation (NSF) collects, uses, and reports performance data on its activities to inform decisions, track progress, and meet statutory reporting requirements. Because it believes the capacity to measure performance is critical to maintaining operational effectiveness, NSF implements a process for the verification and validation (V&V) of performance measure data. This process relies on independent assessment of performance measures. The V&V assessment validates the completeness and reliability of performance information, providing a level of confidence to Congress and the public that the information is complete and reliable while also offering strong support for data-driven decision-making. NSF contracts with Nexight Group to conduct its IV&V of performance goals, including this Priority Goal.

In its Q3 report, the Nexight Team concluded that the performance measure for the APG meets the requirements of completeness and reliability. The data collection processes adhere to the five criteria (Complete, Consistent, Accurate, Timely, and Valid) and are sufficient to ensure that the results are usable. Based on its review of the entries in the Milestone Summary Tables, the Nexight Team concludes that there is sufficient evidence to consider the Q3 reported results as confirmed.

Contributing Programs

All NSF organizational units contribute to the APG activities through either the Working Group or the Community of Practice.

Stakeholder / Congressional Consultations

NSF routinely consults with stakeholders about partnerships, most regularly via FACA meetings and the National Science Board.