

FY 2017 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE PROGRESS UPDATES

In FY 2017, the National Science Foundation conducted Strategic Reviews of the seven Strategic Objectives in its 2014-2018 Strategic Plan, in response to the requirement of the GPRA Modernization Act 2010 Section 1116(f).

The FY 2017 strategic review was a high-level assessment of the NSF strategic review process. The strategic review team assessed both the aggregate outcomes of the recommendations from all the earlier reviews as well as the effectiveness of the strategic review process itself. The strategic review required substantial data collection and analysis to provide the evidence to objectively assess the process and support recommendations to improve the process. The strategic review team included members from the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, NSF's Evaluation and Assessment Capability, and program staff. The team conducted a survey of past participants to obtain views on the strategic review process, interviewed past participants to obtain more contextual information, and reviewed the actions and progress of prior year's recommendations.

Several key findings were emphasized in the strategic review report:

- The process was effective and could be useful as a model for other evidence-based decision-making efforts at NSF. Aspects of the process that were considered to be particularly strong included composition of the teams with specific subject matter expertise, team leadership, well-defined timeline and specific deliverables, and the data and analytic support provided to the strategic review teams.
- The assessment found that action has been taken on 75 percent of Strategic Review recommendations. 47 percent of actions recommended were fully completed.

Key recommendations made by the report included:

- The strategic review process should be considered as a framework for data-driven decision-making throughout the National Science Foundation.
- The strategic review process should be used as a model for leadership and staff engagement for agency-wide planning and priority setting.
- The efficiency and effectiveness of other NSF decision-making groups could be improved by incorporating these aspects of the strategic review process: a defined timeline, specific deliverables, and data and analytic support.
- Participants should continue to be selected based on their subject matter expertise and their leadership and teamwork skills.
- Communications with NSF staff should be improved, particularly at the beginning and end of the process.

All recommendations were accepted by senior management, and many of these actions are already underway including the final recommendation to consider the strategic review framework for broad based decision-making throughout NSF.