



National Science Foundation
Office of The Director

January 27, 2022

Dear Tribal Nation Leader:

As the Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF), an independent federal agency responsible for supporting research and education in all fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), I am committed to improving accessibility to NSF’s programs and expanding NSF’s engagement with individuals and communities who have been historically underrepresented in STEM fields. One important step toward meeting this commitment is to strengthen NSF’s relationships with Tribal Nations.

NSF heard powerful feedback from the Tribal Nations on these topics at the NSF Director’s Town Hall with Tribal Nations, held in the spring of 2021, which included a 90-day comment period. That feedback included a reference, from Chief Benjamin Barnes of the Shawnee Tribe, to the expression, “Nothing about Us without Us.” Based on this feedback, I am committed to meaningful change. Toward this end, I created the Tribal Consultation and Engagement Working Group to focus on strengthening NSF’s relationships with Tribal Nations.

As a follow-up to our Town Hall with Tribal Nations, I invite you or your designee to attend two Listening Sessions facilitated by our Tribal Consultation and Engagement Working Group. These sessions are designed to seek your input on the best ways to enhance NSF’s government-to-government consultation and engagement efforts and to identify steps to improve collaboration on research.

Several date and time options are provided below for each Listening Session; NSF will add additional sessions, if needed.

Table 1. Available Dates and Times for Listening Session 1: Promoting Meaningful Government-to-Government Consultation and Engagement

Meeting Date	TIME ZONES				
	<i>Alaska</i>	<i>Pacific</i>	<i>Mountain</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Eastern</i>
Tuesday, March 22, 2022	10 a.m.–12 p.m.	11 a.m.–1 p.m.	12–2 p.m.	1–3 p.m.	2–4 p.m.
Thursday, March 24, 2022	9–11 a.m.	10 a.m.–12 p.m.	11 a.m.–1 p.m.	12–2 p.m.	1–3 p.m.
Thursday, March 31, 2022	1–3 p.m.	2–4 p.m.	3–5 p.m.	4–6 p.m.	5–7 p.m.

Table 2. Available Dates and Times for Listening Session 2: Enhancing Collaboration on Research

Meeting Date	TIME ZONES				
	<i>Alaska</i>	<i>Pacific</i>	<i>Mountain</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Eastern</i>
Thursday, April 21, 2022	9–11 a.m.	10 a.m.–12 p.m.	11 a.m.–1 p.m.	12–2 p.m.	1–3 p.m.
Wednesday, May 4, 2022	1–3 p.m.	2–4 p.m.	3–5 p.m.	4–6 p.m.	5–7 p.m.
Thursday, May 5, 2022	10 a.m.–12p.m.	11 a.m.–1 p.m.	12–2 p.m.	1–3 p.m.	2–4 p.m.

For these Listening Sessions, we would like to hear your ideas and suggestions regarding how NSF may enhance its efforts to consult and collaborate with Tribal Nations on NSF research policies, practices, processes, and activities that may impact your communities and citizenry. Additional information on the Listening Session topics and guiding questions are included as an attachment to this letter. Although the Listening Sessions will be held virtually via Zoom, attendees also will have the option to participate via conference call.

Please register here to join us for the Listening Sessions:

https://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=304190&org=HRD

To allow for meaningful dialogue, each session will have a limited capacity of 30 participants. If your preferred date and time has reached capacity, you will have the opportunity to select another date and time. As mentioned above, if additional sessions are necessary to accommodate participants, NSF will schedule them.

To supplement the Listening Sessions, I also welcome your written comments on these topics during the accompanying comment period, which will be open through May 14, 2022. Comments may be e-mailed to: tribal.engagement@nsf.gov. As an alternative, you are also welcome to provide comments by visiting our virtual meeting room at your convenience. The virtual meeting room is expected to open in mid-March, and will remain open for the duration of the comment period. This option for commenting can be accessed at the above-referenced website.

The comments we receive during the Listening Sessions and the comment period will be valuable to the development of NSF's Tribal Consultation Plan, which will provide guidance on how NSF may better engage in government-to-government consultation with Tribal Nations moving forward.

I look forward to engaging with you on these important topics and to strengthening our nation-to-nation relationship.

Sincerely,



Dr. Sethuraman Panchanathan
Director, National Science Foundation

Accessibility: Real-time captions will be available during the Zoom Listening Sessions, which will also be recorded.

Prepare for your Zoom session in advance by testing your technology at: <https://zoom.us/test>. Learn more about participating in meetings remotely with NSF at: <https://beta.nsf.gov/about/participant>.

Please email tribal.engagement@nsf.gov to let us know if you need any other accessibility accommodations, such as remote American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting, at least two weeks prior to your preferred session.



National Science Foundation
Office of The Director

ATTACHMENT

Listening Session Topics and Guiding Questions

Topic 1: Promoting Meaningful Government-to-Government Consultation and Engagement

NSF is interested in improving government-to-government consultation and engagement with Tribal Nations and fostering meaningful input regarding ways in which NSF's work may impact tribal resources and interests.

During the NSF Town Hall and the Spring 2021 comment period, NSF heard that there are multiple challenges to meaningful engagement, including:

- NSF Program Officers, who receive proposals and are responsible for identifying when tribal consultation is needed, may have limited knowledge of whether proposed research activities could affect resources of importance to Indigenous peoples
- NSF decision-makers may need an improved understanding of Indigenous science and world perspectives
- cultural and linguistic differences may impede consultation efforts
- the 574 federally recognized Tribes are unique and may require different methods of engagement

NSF also heard a range of potential approaches for addressing these challenges, such as

- establishment of designated liaisons from Tribes to engage with NSF
- engaging with Tribes via information sharing meetings and regional consultations
- creation of an Indigenous people's office within NSF
- development of a community of Native American scholars to bridge communications and identify priorities
- inclusion of a notification in funding opportunity announcements that consultation is a requirement for any research affecting Tribes and their resources

In this listening session, NSF would like to gather additional perspectives from your Tribal Nation and community regarding how NSF's consultation and engagement efforts can be improved through research policies and practices and potential strategies for addressing issues of concern to your Tribal Nation.

Please consider the following questions to guide this listening session.

1. What additional recommendations do you have regarding how NSF or NSF-funded researchers should consult with Tribal Nations about research that may impact tribal resources and/or interests?
2. What is the most significant barrier to meaningful consultation between NSF and your Tribal Nation?
3. Which approaches do you feel would most improve government-to-government consultation and engagement between NSF and your Tribal Nation?
4. What additional suggestions do you have regarding how NSF can enhance its research policies or practices to foster meaningful consultation with Tribal Nations?

NSF appreciates your engagement on this topic.

Topic 2: Enhancing Collaboration on Research

NSF is committed to fully integrating research with education so that today's innovative work will also serve to prepare tomorrow's top scientists and engineers. One of NSF's priorities is working with Tribal Nations to increase their involvement in STEM research. To that end, the agency employs various strategies to support American Indian and Alaska Native people's engagement across its many STEM programs. Such engagement may be external to NSF as faculty and researchers, students, campus administrators or leaders, or as program staff or program leaders within NSF.

During the NSF Town Hall and the Spring 2021 comment period, NSF received many suggestions focused on community - engaged scholarship and tribally driven participatory research including:

- collaborate with Indigenous scientists, scholars, researchers, Tribal leaders, and elders at every stage of proposal development and research
- consult with Tribes regarding research that may impact Tribal communities
- elevate the role of Native language speakers from consultants to research collaborators

In this listening session, NSF would like to gather additional perspectives from Tribal Nations on how it can enhance its research policies and practices to encourage more participation from Tribes in STEM research and respect tribal sovereignty.

Please consider the following questions to guide this listening session.

1. What can NSF do to increase proposal submissions from Tribal governments, organizations, and institutions?
2. What research or educational opportunities (e.g., scholarships, fellowships, and internships) are of most interest to Tribal governments for developing Indigenous researchers in your communities?
3. Given NSF's mandate that federally funded research data be publicly available, how can Indigenous communities work with NSF to formulate data policies that are consistent with Indigenous data sovereignty?

NSF appreciates your engagement on this topic.