

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
4201 WILSON BOULEVARD
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230

CHARGE TO THE COMMITTEE OF VISITORS

**Division of Social and Economic Sciences (SES)
Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences
National Science Foundation**

September 22-24, 2010

The National Science Foundation has a long-standing practice of reviewing all programs on a three-year cycle. The review is performed by a Committee of Visitors (COV), which serves as a subcommittee of the Advisory Committee for the Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences. The COV members form an independent group of external experts. NSF uses COVs to assess the scientific portfolio as well as the review process.

To meet the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) for annual performance assessment, NSF developed performance goals for results of NSF's investment in research and education as descriptive standards. Information on the products of NSF's awards provides the basis for assessing NSF's performance against these standards through the judgment of independent external experts.

The **2010 SES/SBE** COV is charged to consider the performance of the division in two primary areas:

- Assess the quality and integrity of operations, including technical and managerial matters pertaining to proposal recommendations.
- Comment on how the outputs and outcomes generated by awardees have contributed to the attainment of NSF's mission and strategic goals [See "National Science Foundation Investing in America's Future Strategic Plan FY 2006-2011" <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2006/nsf0648/nsf0648.jsp>].

SES/SBE would like your advice about several questions related specifically to the division. Comments on both scientific and management aspects of each of the following division-specific questions would be most welcome:

- **Infrastructure:** SES is aware that the infrastructure needs of our communities are great. The Office of the Assistant Director of the Directorate of Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences also recognizes that infrastructure has been underfunded. Using funds no longer obligated to the Human and Social Dynamics priority area, the OAD has taken a first step to address this situation (see http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf09019). What are the infrastructure needs (broadly defined) in the Social and Economic Sciences? Addressing these needs will likely involve investments in cyber-infrastructure, as well as more traditional forms.

- **Interdisciplinary/Multidisciplinary:** Inter- and multidisciplinary research has the potential to uncover new insights and to address policy issues in new ways. How should SES/SBE best structure itself in order to encourage, identify and fund interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research?
- **Human Resources:** In a time of increasing interdisciplinarity, social, political and economic scientists must master an increasingly broad array of knowledge, skills, and techniques. How might SES enhance our scientists' ability to do so? What other organizations might we collaborate with in such activities?
- **Environmental:** Environmental issues have been identified as a national priority. How can SES scientists best contribute to studies of sustainability and climate change, energy consumption, natural hazards and other topics in environmental research? What should be the balance between collaborating with natural scientists to increase the impact and applicability of their findings, and identifying social-science-specific contributions?
- **Innovation:** Maintaining US competitiveness through innovation will be critical in the upcoming decade. What might SES do better to attract and fund research on innovation, including individual-, organizational- and societal-level factors that contribute to an exceptional ecology of innovation? What should be the balance between studying the causes or drivers of innovation and studying the impacts or outcomes of innovation?
- **Broadening Participation:** Imperative in all consideration of human resources is the need to expand opportunities for underrepresented groups. How might the Division act so as to broaden representation of women, underrepresented populations and individuals with disabilities in our sciences? How might the data, methodologies and theories of our sciences lead to a deeper understanding of the problem and assist in formulating evidence-based policy?
- **Stewards of Science:** How can SES best represent the importance of our sciences both within and external to the National Science Foundation? The NSTC report "Social, Behavioral, and Economic Research in the Federal Context" may be a useful resource.

We would also like your advice on progress we have made on the issues raised by the previous COV during the last three years. Please see the relevant sections in the eBinder and the updated 2009 response to the 2007 COV.

To assist COVs, NSF has developed a basic set of questions and a report template for the entire Foundation. **Please remember that your report must be completed and submitted before final adjournment.**

Thank you again for your service to the NSF.

Sincerely,



Myron Gutmann
Assistant Director
Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences