

February 9, 2021

Suzanne H. Plimpton  
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Dear Suzanne Plimpton:

The Association for Psychological Science (APS) thanks the National Science Foundation (NSF) for the opportunity to provide comments on NSF's 2022–2026 strategic plan (85 FR 81525). As a scientific association of 30,000 individuals dedicated to advancing psychological science, APS members rely on support from NSF to further their work. For this reason, NSF's plans are of central importance to APS members, regardless of their career stage or scientific interest. In this letter, we provide suggestions in response to the three questions asked in the request for information.

**What are the interests, values, and emergent science and policy issues that the Strategic Plan should recognize?**

APS encourages renewed support for and recognition of the importance of the behavioral, social, and economic sciences, which include psychological science. We commend NSF for its commitment to these research areas as evidenced through the work of the Social, Behavioral, & Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE). We encourage NSF to further highlight for the public and other members of the scientific community the many ways that insights from SBE-supported science contribute to society and to the development of new scientific tools, techniques, and the advancement of other scientific fields. Moreover, given the critical contributions of the psychological and behavioral sciences to science and society, we encourage NSF to pursue new funding to support SBE programs and to foster increased integration of SBE initiatives with other research directorates.

We encourage NSF to commit additional investments in core programs that support psychological science research. This includes, but is not limited to, all three of SBE's divisions, as well as its programs in Cognitive Neuroscience; Developmental Sciences; Perception, Action, and Cognition; Social Psychology; Science of Organizations; and more. NSF should continue to ensure that behavioral science is considered and integrated throughout its cross-cutting and integrative programs, such as Future of Work at the Human-Technology Frontier and Growing Convergence research.

APS commends NSF and SBE on the work of the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES). The knowledge produced by NCSES is important and valuable to those

beyond the scientific community. NSF should further increase public awareness of the center's findings. NSF should be recognized as a leading statistical agency.

**How can NSF help maintain US leadership in an evolving global research and education landscape?**

NSF can maintain its global role in research and education by drawing on its strengths. By continuing to frame itself as a worldwide leader in support of investigator-initiated fundamental research, NSF is a model for other research funding organizations. We recommend that NSF develop and continue collaborations with the other key global funders that support psychological science and related fields, for example, the European Research Council. Further, NSF should further showcase the international collaborations it supports, to highlight for the public the benefits derived from international science.

One of NSF's unique strengths is that it supports behavioral science as few other funding agencies around the world do. In fiscal year 2021 appropriations, Congress recognized this: "SBE-supported research makes the U.S. unique among other nations." Congress called on NSF to do more to fund behavioral science research (H. Rpt. 116-455, p. 133-134). NSF can set an example for the global science community by continuing to be a leader in behavioral and social sciences research. Again, this can only occur if funding for SBE increases as part of any agency-wide funding increases.

**How can the plan best underscore the importance to the Nation of fundamental research and its broader impacts?**

Much of the transformative research occurring in psychological science happens at U.S. colleges and other nonprofit research institutions. NSF should rededicate its commitment to these environments. While partnerships with industry, philanthropies, government, and other organizations are crucial for the agency's ongoing success, the academic research community remains the foundation for U.S. fundamental research.

NSF must prioritize and support the next generation of scientists. Members of the scientific community who are students or early-career scientists are at critical inflection points in their scientific careers, and NSF support can often mean the difference between continued versus interrupted or abandoned scientific careers. NSF programs such as the Graduate Research Fellowship Program and the Faculty Early Career Development Program provide essential opportunities for talented scientists. More, at this point in history, when our institutions and economy are stressed and undergoing rapid change, these programs and interventions are needed more than ever. NSF should do everything it can to help students and early-career scientists.

APS encourages NSF to be a global leader in evidence-based activities and the advancement of evidence-based policy. We note that psychological scientists—and those from behavioral science broadly—are well-equipped to contribute to this area. Advances in evidence-based policy may

also entail further support for the area of behavioral insights, which is a discipline that integrates evidence for policymaking.

NSF must continue to emphasize the broader impacts derived from fundamental research. We recommend developing and funding partnerships with scientific societies and other organizations, which are positioned to help support scientists wishing to work with the public, translate science for key audiences, and more. Scientific societies, in their ability to convene experts, publish research, and promote and disseminate findings, should be recognized as a necessary step in a pipeline that begins with NSF funding.

Last, APS calls on NSF to advance its scientific merit and broader impacts alike by being fully inclusive of historically disadvantaged groups. Ensuring underrepresented populations are present and considered in the formation of research questions, grant decisions, and in the distribution of research funding is key to confirming that decisions are made with the best information available. As is the case with behavioral science, diversity science and its applications should be an area that is both specifically supported by NSF and infused among all other areas of NSF's work.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. Please do not hesitate to contact APS if we or our members may be of any assistance to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Gropp". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert Gropp  
Executive Director