

SECTION HEAD FOR EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT CAPABILITY

Office of International and Integrative Activities

I. INTRODUCTION

The Section Head for Evaluation and Assessment Capability has leadership responsibility for the Evaluation and Assessment Capability (EAC) unit, initially located in the Office of International and Integrative Activities (IIA). This unit coordinates evaluation activities of the agency and directly focuses on the Administration's call for rigorous program evaluation and the increased agency capacity for conducting independent evaluations. The unit will be responsible for integrating program assessment/evaluation, policy analysis, and strategic decision making.

NSF is responsible for promoting and advancing scientific progress in the United States by sponsoring scientific and engineering research and by supporting selected programs and activities in science and engineering education. The Foundation currently awards grants and contracts to more than 2,000 colleges and universities, businesses, informal science organizations and other research institutions throughout the country and accounts for about 25 percent of Federal support for basic research going to academic institutions. Each year on average, the Foundation supports about 200,000 scientists, engineers, educators and students at universities, laboratories and field sites all over the United States and throughout the world. NSF supports all fields of fundamental science and engineering, except for medical sciences. In addition to funding research in the traditional academic areas, the agency also supports "high risk, high pay off" ideas, novel collaborations, and numerous projects that allow scientists, engineers, and students to work at the frontiers of knowledge, keeping the United States at the leading edge of discovery.

The incumbent serves as a senior official, working closely with other senior leaders who have been serving as a steering group for the expanded evaluation capability in IIA. As a national expert in evaluation, the incumbent will ensure that the unit has the capability to provide theoretical and analytic expertise for the assessment of policies and programs and provide oversight for independent investments in evaluation models and program evaluations that collect meaningful information to answer NSF evaluative questions about policies and programmatic investments.

II. MAJOR DUTIES

As the Section Head for Evaluation and Assessment Capability, the incumbent:

- Serves as a member of the IIA senior leadership team. Serves as IIA representative to meetings regarding collection and analysis of NSF management/project data.
- Provides leadership for IIA to manage the independent collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of program/thematic evaluation data for decision-making and to help determine the strategic direction of the agency.
- Develops the agency-wide five-year strategic plan for evaluation by engaging a task group in evaluative thinking that results in the identification of questions and what data are needed, options for collecting data in a coordinated systematic approach, and designs for data analysis and sharing results/findings/recommendations.
- Works with senior leadership in the Foundation to establish an annual evaluation agenda to gather timely information to important questions and develop strategies for using data to inform decision making.
- Provides intellectual leadership for designing and/or supporting efficient longitudinal studies and using innovative evaluation designs in assessing progress and benefits of the scientific research investments.
- Coordinates a wide range of analytic activities using agency evaluation staff with an emphasis on quality and objectivity.
- Directs multi-year external formative and summative evaluations of policy trends and new programs/initiatives, ensuring high-quality designs and appropriate data collection for the purpose and use of the evaluations.
- Manages a decision support infrastructure that provides the required data/information to support and improve the organizational capacity to make informed decisions as well as ensuring cost effectiveness.
- Builds capacity for use of internal data systems to conduct ongoing performance assessment.
- Promotes the use of state-of-the art technology to advance progress in tracking and synthesizing data to assess the outcomes of NSF's strategic goals and investment programs.
- Provide consultative evaluation support, as needed and appropriate to NSF directorates/offices. Provides guidance on issues related to design, measurement and analysis and other resource services, including consultants, to Directorate-/Office-led program evaluations.
- Disseminates clear and concise reports of evaluation findings and lessons learned.

- Reviews internal responses to external evaluation reports to ensure the translation of evaluation findings into actionable program recommendations.
- Serves on relevant internal and external committees related to Federal evaluation and/or the evaluation of the science and engineering enterprise.
- Meets with the internal steering group for evaluation planning and review. Meets with evaluation representatives from the Directorates and Offices to capture systematically the needs, data collection and evaluation activities within NSF.
- Refines program performance measures, as needed, in collaboration with those responsible for NSF performance goals. Manages all aspects of the Evaluation Capability unit, including budget, staffing and data collection logistics. Communicates progress of the unit and findings of evaluation and policy studies to NSF officials.

III. SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS

The incumbent must have an advanced degree with significant experience in program evaluation and evaluation capacity building as well as experience in developing a new organizational structure for coordination and agency efficiency/accountability. He/she must have demonstrated experience in the development, planning, coordination, and evaluation of scientific research and education activities for a multidiscipline organization. A working knowledge of Federal planning and programming processes is essential. The incumbent must be able to communicate, on a peer basis, with senior scientific and managerial personnel throughout the Foundation, with other agencies, and the general science community.

IV. DIRECTION RECEIVED

The incumbent will report to the Head of IIA, who will provide broad policy guidance. Other than working closely with an internal steering group while exercising expert judgment and intellectual leadership, there are no established guidelines beyond generally accepted NSF policy and practice.