FY 2026 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PLAN

The U.S. National Science Foundation's (NSF) mission is to promote the progress of science; advance the national health, prosperity and welfare; and secure the national defense. NSF's Annual Performance Plan fulfills key aspects of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Modernization Act of 2010 by outlining the agency's goals in four priority areas: 1) STEM talent and capacity, 2) Tools and knowledge, 3) Societal benefit and impact, 4) NSF operations and management.

1. STEM Talent and Capacity

Annual Goal 1.1: Expand geography of STEM research

Goal statement: Increase the percentage of NSF's research funding to institutions in Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) jurisdictions.

About this Goal: EPSCoR seeks to advance research capacity in jurisdictions (states and territories) that receive relatively small proportions of the federal research budget.[1] EPSCoR invests in research infrastructure, co-funding in partnership with NSF directorates and offices, and outreach to investigators and institutions in EPSCoR jurisdictions. NSF is developing tools and strategies to track and achieve these targets, including prioritization of funding that enables sustainable growth in the research competitiveness of EPSCoR jurisdictions.

		FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Percentage of NSF funding to institutions in EPSCoR jurisdictions[2]	Target				15.5%	16.0%	16.5%	17.0%
	Results				15.9%	19.6%		

Discussion of FY 2026 Target: The FY 2026 target was established in statute.

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[1] A map of all EPSCoR eligible jurisdictions is available at www.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/epscor/epscor-criteria-eligibility.
[2] Targets for FY 2023 through FY 2026 are provided in Section 10325 of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022. www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ167/PLAW-117publ167.pdf.

Annual Goal 1.2: Increase utilization of NSF's Education and Training Application (ETAP)

Goal Statement: Increase the percentage of awards utilizing ETAP within targeted programs.[3]

About this Goal: ETAP provides a secure online application platform for collecting applicant level information from individuals interested in NSF-funded education and training opportunities, such as research experiences, scholarships, and fellowships. Greater use of ETAP will improve NSF's data on participants in NSF-funded education and training programs, and improve the agency's ability to make informed program and policy decisions. Such information enables NSF to understand each program's reach and to conduct evaluations with increasing levels of rigor.

Exhibit 1.2. Annual Goal: Increase utilization of the Education and Training Application (ETAP)

Annual Goal 1.2: Increase utilization of ETAP		FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Number of NSF programs using ETAP	Target				7	14	16	
	Results			4	13	14		
Percentage of awards using ETAP in Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) Program	Target				30%	33%	40%	45%
	Results			14%	27%	36%		
Percentage of awards using ETAP in Research Experiences for Teachers (RET) program	Target				30%	30%	30%	26%
	Results			13%	13%	23%		

Discussion of FY 2026 Target: NSF anticipates restructuring programs by the start of FY 2026. Thus, NSF plans to discontinue the target related to the number of NSF programs using ETAP and prioritize increasing the percentage of awards using ETAP in the REU and RET areas. The NSF ETAP system has primarily been used by research experiences programs for undergraduates and for teachers, with most NSF divisions encouraging ETAP use for these programs. FY 2026 targets are informed by FY 2024 and 2025 results.

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[3] More information on ETAP can be found at https://etap.nsf.gov.

2. Tools and Knowledge

Annual Goal 2.1: Ensure that Major Facility Infrastructure Investments are on Track

Goal Statement: Keep negative cost and schedule variance at or below 10 percent for all Major Facility projects in the Construction Stage that are between 10 and 90 percent complete.

About this Goal: This goal helps ensure program integrity and responsible stewardship of Major Facility investments that have a Total Project Cost (TPC) greater than $100 million. Modern and effective research infrastructure is critical to maintaining U.S. international leadership in science and engineering. The use of Earned Value Management (EVM) is required for all Major Facilities in the Construction Stage. Cost and schedule variance are key EVM indicators of whether a project is on track relative to the project plan.

Exhibit 2.1. Annual Goal: Ensure that Major Facility Infrastructure Investments are on Track

Annual Goal 2.1: Ensure that Major Facility Infrastructure Investments are on Track		FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Major Facility Construction Projects: Percentage Meeting Cost and Schedule Targets	Target	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Results	75%	40%	40%	60%	50%		

Discussion of FY 2026 Target: Building on the progress and lessons learned from prior years, NSF's objective for FY 2026 remains consistent: to maintain negative cost and schedule variances at or below 10 percent for all Major Facilities in the Construction Stage that are between 10 percent and 90 percent complete. This continued focus ensures rigorous project management and adherence to budget and schedule expectations.

Annual Goal 2.2: Ensure that Mid-Scale Infrastructure Investments are on Track

Goal Statement: Keep negative cost and schedule variance at or below 10 percent for all Mid-Scale Research Infrastructure projects that are between 10 and 90 percent complete.

About this Goal: NSF's Mid-Scale Research Infrastructure programs are intended to meet the research community's needs for modern and effective research infrastructure at a scale that is otherwise difficult for individual institutions to acquire. Projects tracked under this goal have costs that fall below the $100 million threshold for a Major Facility project but exceed $20 million.[4] Tracking project performance through EVM metrics is one method for ensuring proper NSF oversight and stewardship of Federal funds. Use of EVM is optional for Mid-Scale Research Infrastructure projects, and nine of the 11 mid-scale projects with costs above $20 million are using EVM.

Exhibit 2.2. Annual Goal: Ensure that Mid-Scale Infrastructure Investments are on Track

Annual Goal 2.2: Ensure that Mid-Scale Infrastructure Investments are on Track		FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Mid-Scale Research Infrastructure Projects: Percentage Meeting Cost and Schedule Targets	Target	Track cost and schedule for all defined projects		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Results	N/A	Achieved	60%	67%	89%		

Discussion of FY 2026 Target: For FY 2026, NSF aims to maintain negative cost and schedule variances at or below 10 percent for all Mid-Scale Research Infrastructure projects that utilize Earned Value Management (EVM) and are between 10 percent and 90 percent complete.

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[4] Although Mid-Scale Research Infrastructure projects begin at the threshold of $4 million, this goal tracks those most likely to propose using Earned Value Management principles, with total project costs of $20 million or more.

3. Societal Benefit and Impact

Annual Goal 3.1: Grow Partnerships

Goal Statements:

- 3.1a: Increase the funding invested from industry and non-profits that NSF programs leverage to support the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) enterprise, by 20 percent over the prior fiscal year.
- 3.1b: Increase the funding invested from other federal agencies that NSF programs leverage to support the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) enterprise, by five percent over the prior fiscal year.

About this Goal: Partnerships are essential to growing research and innovation ecosystems across the country. This goal measures NSF's ability to leverage funding from partnerships. It focuses on partnerships that are shaping research directions and accelerating translation of knowledge gained through NSF's research portfolio to address the Nation's most pressing technological, societal, and economic needs.

Increase funding that NSF programs leverage to support the STEM enterprise.		FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
3.1a: obligated funds ($ millions) from industry and non-profits	Target	Establish baseline	$30.3	$36.3	$43.6
	Result	$25.2	$43.9		
3.1b: obligated funds ($ millions) through partnerships with other federal agencies	Target	Establish baseline	$133.6	$140.3	$147.3
	Result	$127.3	$163.5		

Discussion of FY 2026 Targets: The FY 2026 target for 3.1a reflects a 20 percent increase above the prior year's level for funding from industry and non-profits, and for 3.1b a five percent increase above the prior year's level for funding from other federal agencies. Funds will be attributed to the year in which they are committed to specific NSF investments.

4. NSF Operations and Management

Annual Goal 4.1: IT systems availability

Goal Statement: Ensure availability of IT resources for NSF staff and the broader research community.

About this Goal: The availability of information technology (IT) systems is integral to delivering excellent and secure Federal services and customer experience. NSF prioritizes the availability of its IT services and coordinates downtime for critical maintenance and service releases to minimize disruption. This goal measures NSF's success in keeping critical IT systems available. Unexpected downtime due to a system issue or incident will lead to reductions in NSF's IT systems availability percentage.

Annual Goal 4.1: Provide robust and reliable IT services		FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
NSF IT systems availability (percentage)	Target	99.6	99.6	99.6	99.6	99.6	99.6	99.6
	Result	99.8	99.8	99.8	99.9	99.9		

Discussion of FY 2026 Target: Consistent with prior years, NSF aims to maintain or exceed 99.6 percent availability for IT systems, excluding planned downtime of 375 hours for maintenance and upgrades. In FY 2026, NSF will continue to carefully plan for system upgrades and scheduled maintenance to maintain high levels of system availability.

Annual Goal 4.2: Make Timely Proposal Decisions

Time to decision or "dwell time" represents the amount of time that passes between receipt of a proposal and notification to the proposer about the funding decision. This indicator tracks the percent of applicants informed whether their proposals have been declined or recommended for funding within 182 days, approximately six months, of the proposal deadline, target date, or receipt date. NSF considers timeliness indicators to be in balance with review quality. A review period that is too long inhibits the progress of research as it delays the funding process, and a review period that is too short inhibits review quality.

Make Timely Proposal Decisions		FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Percent of proposals declined or recommended for funding within 182 days. (percentage)	Target[5]	75	75	75	70	70	Re-baseline	TBD
	Result	68	65	66	70	66		

Discussion of FY 2026 Target: NSF will use the FY 2025 baseline to set targets for FY 2026 and future years.

[5] In FY 2025, reporting for this measure changed from being a targeted goal to an indicator.

Annual Goal 4.3. Time to Hire (T2H)

Goal Statements:

- 4.4a: Decrease the average number of calendar days it takes to hire staff in the General Schedule (GS) workforce to 80 days.
- 4.4b: Decrease the average number of calendar days it takes to hire staff in Administratively Determined positions by 10 percent from FY 2025 levels.

About This Goal: Time to Hire (T2H) begins with the submission of a requested hiring need to the human resources office and ends on the date the new employee enters on duty. Reducing the time to hire and onboard staff improves NSF's ability to fulfill its mission by placing qualified staff in key roles.

NSF's unique hiring authority supports hiring from the academic sector, where it is common to conduct a hiring process six months or more before the anticipated start time of the new hire. In order to take steps to improve time to hire, NSF must look at each hiring process separately to make improvements. NSF is developing tools and strategies to empower hiring managers and provide insight into the timing of each stage in the hiring process.

Annual Goal 4.4: Time to hire		FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Average number of days to hire a General Schedule (GS) employee	Target				Re-Baseline	80
	Result	124	143	142		
Average number of days to hire an Administratively Determined (AD) employee	Target				Re-Baseline	10% reduction from FY 2025
	Result	153	167	158		

Discussion of Targets: The FY 2026 target for hires in GS positions is 80-days, in accordance with Executive Order *Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service*. The separate FY 2026 target for hires in AD positions reflects that NSF's unique hiring authority supports hiring from the academic sector, where it is common to conduct a hiring process six months or more before the anticipated start time of the new hire.