

FY 2013 REPORT TEMPLATE FOR NSF COMMITTEES OF VISITORS (COVs)

The table below should be completed by program staff.

Date of COV:	September 9–10, 2013		
Program:	Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP)		
Division:	Division of Human Resource Development (HRD)		
Directorate:	Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR)		
Number of actions reviewed:			
	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012
Proposal Types	3	20	1
Awards	1	14	1
Declines	2	6	0
Files: AGEP Review Actions Documents			
Data Source: Jackets			
Total number of actions within AGEP during the period under review:			
	FY2010	FY2011	FY2012
Proposal Types	3	33	1
Awards	1	19	1
Declines	2	14	0
Files:			
Data Source: Jackets			
Manner in which reviewed actions were selected:			
<p>For the three years under review, all unsolicited proposals that were submitted to the AGEP program -- three proposals in FY2010, three in FY2011, and one in FY2012 -- were selected for review.</p> <p>In addition, a random and representative sample of 17 jackets was selected from the "Planning Grants" and "Project Evaluation Grants" proposals that were submitted in response to solicitation NSF 10-605, which was issued in FY2010. Those proposals were reviewed and awarded/declined in FY2011. Eleven awards and six declines were selected. To develop this sample, proposal numbers ending with 5 were selected, followed by those ending with 3, those ending with 7, etc., using the sequence 5, 3, 7, 9, 0, 2, 4, 6, and 1, until the desired sample size was achieved.</p>			

COV Membership

	Name	Affiliation
COV Chair or Co-Chairs:	Dr. Evelyn Hammonds	Harvard University
	Dr. Francisco C. Rodriguez	MiraCosta Community College District
COV Members:	Dr. Rita Teutonico	Utah State University
	Dr. Jabbar Bennett	Brown University
	Dr. Bianca Bernstein	Arizona State University

INTEGRITY AND EFFICIENCY OF THE PROGRAM'S PROCESSES AND MANAGEMENT

Briefly discuss and provide comments for *each* relevant aspect of the program's review process and management. Comments should be based on a review of proposal actions (awards, declinations, and withdrawals) that were *completed within the past three fiscal years*. Provide comments for *each* program being reviewed and for those questions that are relevant to the program(s) under review. Quantitative information may be required for some questions. Constructive comments noting areas in need of improvement are encouraged.

I. Questions about the quality and effectiveness of the program's use of merit review process. Please answer the following questions about the effectiveness of the merit review process and provide comments or concerns in the space below the question.

QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF MERIT REVIEW PROCESS	YES, NO, DATA NOT AVAILABLE, or NOT APPLICABLE
<p>1. Are the review methods (for example, panel, ad hoc, site visits) appropriate?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>The review process involved panel review for the solicited proposals, primarily evaluation and planning proposals during the time period being reviewed, and ad hoc review for the unsolicited proposals. The panel review process worked well for the solicited proposals, providing quite detailed panel summaries that included synthesized comments from the group. The unsolicited proposals only received ad hoc reviews, which provided less feedback to the Principal Investigators (PIs), since it did not summarize the reviews or provide a consensus statement from the reviewers.</p> <p>The COV recommends that if future unsolicited proposals are accepted, a virtual panel be convened to review the unsolicited, write a panel summary, and agree on a ranking recommendation.</p>	YES
<p>2. Are both merit review criteria addressed</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a) In individual reviews?</p> <p>Yes, the individual reviews all contained a discussion of both broader impacts and intellectual merit.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">b) In panel summaries?</p> <p>Yes, all of the proposals that had panel review included a discussion of both criteria in the panel summary.</p>	YES

<p>c) In Program Officer review analyses?</p> <p>Yes, both criteria were specifically addressed in the Program Officer (PO) review analyses.</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>The review analyses by the POs were very thorough and thoughtfully addressed both review criteria.</p>	
<p>3. Do the individual reviewers giving written reviews provide substantive comments to explain their assessment of the proposals?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>Yes, the vast majority of the individual reviews gave constructive comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposals they reviewed. While there is no calibration of the metrics that reviewers use to assign a specific rating, all reviewers tried to explain why they had given a proposal the rating they did through their review comments.</p>	YES
<p>4. Do the panel summaries provide the rationale for the panel consensus (or reasons consensus was not reached)?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>Yes, the panel summaries explained the strengths and weaknesses of the proposals and then explained why the panel as a whole had decided on a certain consensus ranking for the proposal.</p>	YES
<p>5. Does the documentation in the jacket provide the rationale for the award/decline decision?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>Yes, the documents in the jackets are generally helpful in understanding the funding decisions that were made. However, in some instances the concerns of the panel did not seem to weigh into the PO's decision to fund or not. For example, in some cases the panel had concerns about ample collaboration and/or evaluation plans, but the PO still decided to fund the proposal. It was not clear if addressing the concerns of the panel was a condition of the award.</p>	YES
<p>6. Does the documentation to the PI provide the rationale for the award/decline decision?</p>	YES

<p>Comments:</p> <p>In the majority of the proposals, the information provided to the PIs is sufficient to understand the funding decision. The context statements do a good job of explaining the level of competitiveness of the competition. In some of the decline decisions, the reviews and panel summary have both strengths and weaknesses that make it difficult to understand the final decision to fund or not.</p> <p>The COV recommends that the specific factors that determined an individual award vs. decline decision should be communicated to each PI.</p>	
<p>7. Additional comments on the quality and effectiveness of the program's use of merit review process:</p>	

II. Questions concerning the selection of reviewers. Please answer the following questions about the selection of reviewers and provide comments or concerns in the space below the question.

<p>SELECTION OF REVIEWERS</p>	<p>YES , NO, DATA NOT AVAILABLE, or NOT APPLICABLE</p>
<p>1. Did the program make use of reviewers having appropriate expertise and/or qualifications?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>In most instances, reviewers had appropriate expertise and/or qualifications. A high proportion of panelists were senior administrators from research-intensive institutions, with a number of them from a concentrated geographic region.</p> <p>The COV recommends increasing the geographic and gender diversity of reviewers, as well as including reviewers from a broad range of perspectives and roles within institutions, including faculty who are implementing programs.</p>	<p>YES</p>
<p>2. Did the program recognize and resolve conflicts of interest when appropriate?</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p>Comments:</p> <p>There was only one conflict of interest (COI) noted in the list of panelists used for the proposals the COV reviewed. However, there was no mention of how the COI was handled during the panel. The COV assumed the person with the conflict left the room for discussion of the proposal, but this was not noted in the review analysis.</p>	
<p>Additional comments on reviewer selection:</p> <p>AGEP should be commended for identifying a diverse cohort of reviewers as it relates to race/ethnicity and institution/organization type, but is encouraged to obtain a sufficient level of geographic and gender diversity.</p>	

III. Questions concerning the management of the program under review. Please comment on the following:

<p>MANAGEMENT OF THE PROGRAM UNDER REVIEW</p>
<p>1. Management of the program.</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>The FY2010 Management Plan subsumed the AGEPE program under the umbrella of The Alliances for Broadening Participation to include LSAMP and the Bridges to the Doctorate programs. No new proposals were solicited. In FY2010, 3 unsolicited proposals were received of which one was funded. No explicit attention was afforded to the AGEPE program in the Management Plan with the exception of HRD plans to visit all AGEPE alliances in FY2010. There was no indication that any site visits were done or with what results.</p> <p>The FY2011 Management Plan referred to forthcoming program modifications and included the intention to make smaller awards, specifically for evaluation efforts at existing alliances and planning activities for future alliances. The period under COV review included only one major competition, specifically FY2011 when 33 proposals were considered, and 19 awards were made in accordance with the evaluation and planning foci.</p> <p>The FY2012 Management Plan reflected major changes to the primary objectives of the program with a move toward developing, implementing, studying, and disseminating models for enhancing the participation and success of URM students at the graduate and postdoctoral levels. Awards from the FY2012 solicitation have not yet been made. The unsolicited proposals that were received were not funded.</p> <p>The COV thinks that the substantial changes made in the FY2012 solicitation reflect appropriately strong management of the program in response to multiple sources of input, including external stakeholders and across NSF.</p>

2. Responsiveness of the program to emerging research and education opportunities.

Comments:

The FY2012 & FY2013 Management Plan and solicitation NSF 12-554 reflect an exceptionally thorough effort to align the AGEP program with NSF and HRD priorities and be responsive to COV recommendations, multiple external assessments, and consultation with stakeholders. A fundamental shift in priorities from promoting partnerships to building knowledge, articulating three tracks, and finding pathways for collaboration within EHR and with other NSF Directorates represent important improvements to and reformulation of the program. It will be critical to assess whether the proposals and awards that result from the new directions reflect the revised AGEP priorities and demonstrate the intended impact. Proposals for a BPS Resource Network and a new program evaluation model were promising; however, a reduction in funding appears to have stalled these efforts.

3. Program planning and prioritization process (internal and external) that guided the development of the portfolio.

Comments:

It was clear that input from both external and internal stakeholders contributed appropriately to the development of program priorities.

4. Responsiveness of program to previous COV comments and recommendations.

Comments:

The 2007 and 2010 COVs had concerns about the shortage of staff. Staffing for AGEP in FY2010 is a bit unclear since information is provided only about the entire team for LSAMP and AGEP including temporary staff. For FY2011 and FY2012, one PO and shared personnel were assigned to AGEP. However, the description of staff support is misleading since the program currently only has only one PO who works on 4 different programs.

The COV envisions the newly formulated AGEP will require substantial community outreach and education, as well as the necessary program management, and the COV recommends that minimally one additional rotator be assigned full-time to the program to assist the current PO.

The 2010 COV commented on the need for increased diversity of reviewers and that has been addressed.

The emphasis in the FY2012 solicitation on calling for scholarly work is directly responsive to the COV recommendations.

Although the 2010 COV recommended increased site visits and plans for site visits were included in all three management plans, it appears that none occurred. Site visits or reverse site visits are important means to reinforce NSF's goals and evaluate the effectiveness of projects.

Although more collaboration across NSF programs and directorates and with other entities have been recommended by the COVs and projected in the Management Plans, there is no concrete

evidence of these collaborations except for the MPS Dear Colleague Letter.

Additional COV recommendations for Program Management:

- Since the funds for the program have been reduced, the program needs to determine the appropriate balance between award types and sizes.
- Ensure the awards that result from the new directions reflect the revised priorities and demonstrate the intended impact.
- Since there have been many substantive changes to the program, provide explicit instructions to reviewers, and/or a detailed review template, that aligns with the reformulated goals.
- The COV favors the idea of primarily funding solicited proposals since this allows uniformity of review and comparison across proposals.
- If unsolicited proposals are going to be considered, they should directly align with the new AGEP goals.
- For larger award sizes, such as AGEP-Transformation, find co-funding partners with research directorates.
- Explore mechanisms for co-management of programs or administrative re-alignment with the Division of Graduate Education (DGE).

IV. Questions about Portfolio. Please answer the following about the portfolio of awards made by the program under review.

RESULTING PORTFOLIO OF AWARDS	APPROPRIATE, NOT APPROPRIATE, OR DATA NOT AVAILABLE
<p>1. Does the program portfolio have an appropriate balance of awards across disciplines and sub-disciplines of the activity?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>Since AGEP awards are institution-wide awards, most are not discipline specific. One unsolicited award was in a specific discipline area and was co-funded with the MPS directorate.</p> <p>The COV recommends finding ways to get more NSF directorates involved with AGEP projects, such as through co-funding of AGEP projects, particularly those in specific disciplinary areas.</p>	N/A
<p>2. Are awards appropriate in size and duration for the scope of the projects?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>Most of the awards in this time frame were planning and evaluation awards, which are quite small in dollars. In many cases, these awards seemed much</p>	APPROPRIATE - MOSTLY

<p>too small for the PIs to achieve substantive results. There seemed to be a disproportionate amount of program funds spent on a few large, unsolicited awards. The success rate for unsolicited proposals was 71% compared to 55% for solicited proposals.</p>	
<p>3. Does the program portfolio include awards for projects that are innovative or potentially transformative?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>The portfolio of awards did not seem to include many innovative or transformative ideas. They did not seem to extend beyond what is already known in the field, but just implementing known practices. Many of the awards in this portfolio were for planning and evaluation, and were small in size and, thus, would not be expected to be especially transformative.</p>	<p>NOT APPROPRIATE</p>
<p>4. Does the program portfolio include inter- and multi-disciplinary projects?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>The majority of the projects are cross-institution projects, so are not discipline-based. A large physics-based program was among the five unsolicited awards made.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>5. Does the program portfolio have an appropriate geographical distribution of Principal Investigators?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>While there are proposal submissions for a wide geographic distribution, the planning awards do seem to be from a more limited geographic range and primarily concentrated in the East. This was mentioned in the 2010 COV report and still seems to be the case.</p> <p>Proposal submissions were from a wide geographic distribution, while the awards went to institutions in a more limited geographic range. In addition, the majority of awards seemed to go to institutions that already have a history of success with broadening participation programs.</p> <p>The COV recommends that emphasis be placed on ensuring funds are distributed to a wider range of institutions and those who have not yet received funds for broadening participation. In addition, solicitations should require proposers to present empirical evidence indicating the need for the AGEP funds and potential impact of the investment.</p>	<p>NOT APPROPRIATE</p>
<p>6. Does the program portfolio have an appropriate balance of awards to different types of institutions?</p>	<p>NOT APPROPRIATE</p>

<p>Comments:</p> <p>The majority of awards seemed to go to institutions that already have a history of success with broadening participation programs.</p> <p>The COV recommends that the program work to attract and provide technical assistance, where appropriate, to institutions that have not received a high proportion of broadening participation funds already and to those where the investment has the potential to make the most difference.</p>	
<p>7. Does the program portfolio have an appropriate balance of awards to new investigators?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>Overall, 20% of the PIs and Co-PIs in the award portfolio were new investigators. However, the size of the portfolio we reviewed is so small it is hard to make generalizations about appropriate proportions.</p> <p>The opportunity for new investigators to become involved in these alliances is viewed positively by the COV. The COV recommends and encourages the program to include new investigators.</p>	<p>APPROPRIATE</p>
<p>8. Does the program portfolio include projects that integrate research and education?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>Historically, the AGEP program has been focused more on implementation than research, so the portfolio reviewed did not involve many research activities. The new priorities proposed in the FY2012 solicitation have the potential to successfully integrate research and education.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>9. Does the program portfolio have appropriate participation of underrepresented groups¹?</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>The AGEP awards target increasing the participation of members of underrepresented groups in the professoriate. The COV did not receive aggregate data on the demographics of the students who were served by the AGEP program, though this data is available in individual project annual reports and the AIR report from 2009. The evaluation awards funded by</p>	<p>APPROPRIATE</p>

¹ NSF does not have the legal authority to require principal investigators or reviewers to provide demographic data. Since provision of such data is voluntary, the demographic data available are incomplete. This may make it difficult to answer this question for small programs. However, experience suggests that even with the limited data available, COVs are able to provide a meaningful response to this question for most programs.

<p>AGEP should be able to assess the level of involvement that was actually achieved.</p> <p>The COV recommends that the AGEP program track students who have participated in AGEP-funded programs and monitor the impact of the program on their future careers. In addition, the program should disseminate these success stories to increase the program's visibility and demonstrate its impact.</p>	
<p>10. Is the program relevant to national priorities, agency mission, relevant fields and other constituent needs? Include citations of relevant external reports.</p> <p>Source: Jackets</p> <p>Comments:</p> <p>The FY2012 AGEP solicitation's goals and objectives are closely aligned with the NSF and HRD priorities outlined in the NSF Strategic Plan FY2011-2016 and recent budget requests. The new directions of the AGEP program also address some of the concerns and recommendations of reports such as <i>Rising Above the Gathering Storm</i> (2007), <i>Understanding Interventions That Broaden Participation in Research Careers</i> (2009), and <i>Expanding Underrepresented Minority Participation</i> (2011), particularly with respect to program evaluation and knowledge-sharing along with career pathways issues.</p>	<p>APPROPRIATE</p>
<p>11. Additional comments on the quality of the projects or the balance of the portfolio:</p> <p>There seems to be some overlap in goals and objectives between EHR programs, with a small number of institutions applying for many of the programs aimed at broadening participation.</p> <p>The COV recommends better coordination between EHR programs with regard to their award portfolios, especially within HRD. In addition, the COV recommends that the HRD programs more clearly distinguish each program's goals and specify the role of each within the Broadening Participation portfolio.</p>	

OTHER TOPICS

1. Please comment on any program areas in need of improvement or gaps (if any) within program areas.

Better integration with the NSF research directorates and more extensive co-funding of AGEP projects is encouraged. Partnering with SBE on research efforts related to the science of broadening participation is encouraged. AGEP should ensure diverse participation on review panels, including disciplinary, career stage, geographic, etc. More focus on including faculty members vs. senior administrators is encouraged.

2. Please provide comments as appropriate on the program's performance in meeting program-specific goals and objectives that are not covered by the above questions.

The COV has no additional comments.

3. Please identify agency-wide issues that should be addressed by NSF to help improve the program's performance.

See answer to question IV.11 above.

4. Please provide comments on any other issues the COV feels are relevant.

NSF should gather data on student tracking, since that would help with project outcome assessments.

More extensive collaboration with DGE seems appropriate. Possible mechanisms for co-management of the program or administrative re-alignment should be explored.

5. NSF would appreciate your comments on how to improve the COV review process, format and report template.

The COV has no additional comments.

V. Supplementary Questions for AGEP provided by Evelyn Hammonds

1. What is the status of ad hoc reviews?

For review of the unsolicited proposals, the program received ad hoc reviews, which were substantive and addressed both review criteria. However, these proposals did not have the benefit of receiving panel summary comments.

2. Have changes been made to the instructions given to reviewers regarding merit review criteria?

Since there have been many substantive changes to the NSF, EHR, HRD, and AGEP language, the COV recommends that instructions to reviewers are very explicit about not only NSF's goals, but the goals of the AGEP program. Using a template listing the AGEP-specific criteria that reviewers need to address is one way to guide reviewers.

3. Is there evidence in evaluations of projects of the effectiveness with respect to innovative and transformative activities?

The COV's opinion was that the projects funded were not particularly innovative or transformative. The COV expects that the new FY2012 solicitation will bring in much more novel approaches and models, but the list of new awards was not available at the time of review.

4. Are all demographic groups well served by the program?

The COV did not have aggregate data on the demographics of participating students except for the data in the AIR report from 2009.

AGEP has primarily been serving African Americans and Hispanics, with less emphasis on American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders.

Women are not included in this list of the priority groups supported in the AGEP goal, though women are a priority in the HRD goal. The COV thinks the groups considered URM should be consistent between the AGEP and HRD goals.

HRD: "The Division of Human Resource Development (HRD) serves as a focal point for NSF's agency-wide commitment to enhancing the quality and excellence of STEM education and research through broadening participation by historically underrepresented groups - minorities, women, and persons with disabilities."

AGEP: "The AGEP program supports the national goal of increasing the numbers of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders (URMs), including URMs with disabilities, entering and completing graduate education and postdoctoral training, and entering academic STEM careers.

SIGNATURE BLOCK:



For the 2013 AGEP COV
Dr. Rita Teutonico
Panel Chair