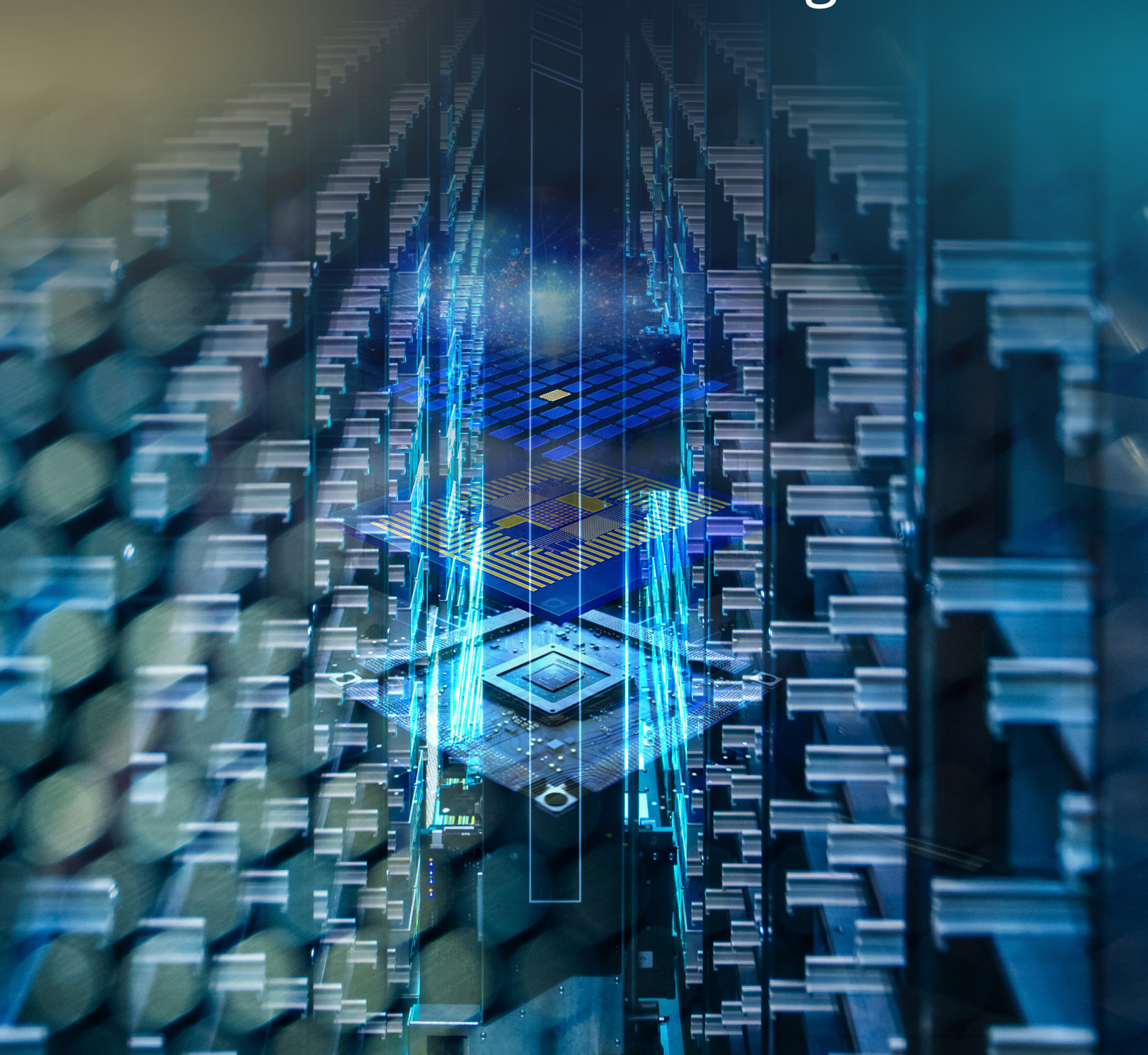




U.S. National Science Foundation

NSF FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan





The U.S. National Science Foundation *Fiscal Year 2026-2030 Strategic Plan* advances the administration's key priorities of maintaining unrivaled U.S. leadership in science and technology and ensuring that the benefits of discovery improve American security and promote economic growth. From the early foundations of the internet and nanotechnology to today's advances in artificial intelligence and quantum computing, NSF-supported research continues to catalyze innovation and enhance national security. Looking ahead, the challenges and opportunities facing our nation demand bold scientific ambition and a commitment to restoring trust through advancing Gold Standard Science.

This strategic plan communicates the key goals and strategies our agency will pursue to advance the administration's research and development priorities: continued leadership in critical and emerging technologies; accessible, world-class research infrastructure; secure research environments; and the translation of discoveries into economic and societal impact. NSF will also modernize agency operations to reduce the burden on the research community and ensure greater efficiency and accountability for the use of public funds.

I look forward to working with the administration, Congress and the science and technology community to advance NSF's mission — “to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and to secure the national defense” — through the goals outlined in this plan.



Brian Stone
Chief of Staff, Performing the Duties of the NSF Director
U.S. National Science Foundation

Overview

The U.S. National Science Foundation is an independent federal agency that supports science and technology in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories. For more than 75 years, NSF has advanced the frontiers of STEM research and innovation. To keep the United States at the leading edge of discovery, NSF funds basic and solutions-oriented research that generates new knowledge to fuel industries of the future, create world-leading technologies and improve the lives of the American people.

NSF MISSION

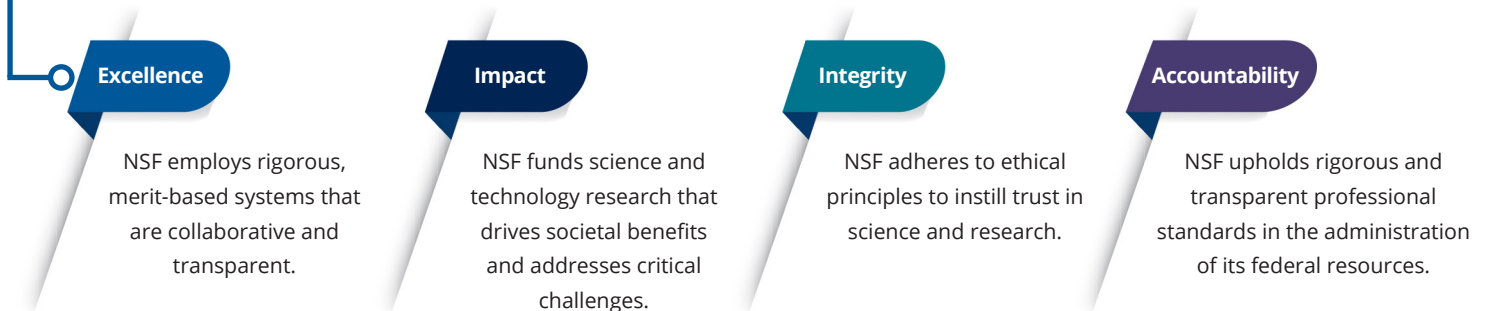
To promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity and welfare; and to secure the national defense.¹

NSF VISION

A prosperous and secure future for all Americans, driven by NSF's strategic investments in research, innovation, infrastructure, STEM education and workforce development.

NSF CORE VALUES

NSF's core values guide the organization in support of the mission. These core values have been developed through the active engagement of NSF staff and guide how the agency makes decisions, sets priorities, addresses challenges, manages trade-offs, recruits and develops personnel, and works with awardees.



Stakeholder engagement.

NSF developed its *FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan* in coordination with the National Science Board, the Executive Office of the President and Congress. NSF conducted stakeholder engagement via a "Dear Colleague Letter" issued Jan. 13, 2026, to the science and technology community requesting information to guide the agency's implementation of its strategic plan objectives and strategies. The agency also held sessions with its staff to inform them on the development and implementation of the strategic plan and will continue engagement throughout the life of the plan.

NSF's performance management framework.

NSF has established a robust performance management framework in support of the President's Management Agenda, with the agency's strategic plan serving as its blueprint.² In the *FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan*, NSF has established three strategic goals, supported by eight strategic objectives that define the outcomes the agency seeks to achieve. Each objective includes actionable strategies highlighted in italics and measures that NSF will further develop and assess in its annual performance plan and report. The measures reflect both performance goals with specified annual targets, as well as other indicators of progress that do not include a targeted level of performance.

The following section outlines the strategic goals and objectives.

1. National Science Foundation Act of 1950.

2. The President's Management Agenda, released Dec. 8, 2025: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/M-26-03-Presidents-Management-Agenda.pdf>

Goal 1. Ensure American excellence and national security through investments in transformative research and innovation.

Objective 1.1. Uphold tenets of Gold Standard Science while enabling groundbreaking research and innovation.

Scientific progress and technological innovation form the foundation of America's economic strength and global leadership. Breakthroughs in science and technology have fueled prosperity, improved national security and advanced the well-being of the American people. With its mandate to support science and engineering and its engagement with researchers nationwide, NSF is uniquely positioned to drive the next era of scientific discovery and innovation. While the private sector's share of total basic research funding is increasing,³ NSF will continue to play a unique role in supporting research at the cutting edge of discovery, including investing in bold ideas that may not yet attract private investment. NSF will also champion researchers to translate new knowledge into practice to address national priorities, grow the economy and improve Americans' lives. NSF will uphold the highest standards of scientific integrity by adhering to the appropriate tenets of Gold Standard Science⁴

Strategy 1: Deliver benefits for the American people by prioritizing research funding that accelerates discovery and innovation. NSF will review and revise its funding opportunities to enhance impact, phasing out lower-priority opportunities and launching new ones to capitalize on emerging ideas.

Strategy 2: Enhance the impact of NSF research by establishing and advancing partnerships. NSF will expand partnerships with entities that share its vision of supporting high-impact, cutting-edge research. NSF will encourage awardees to build partnerships that achieve shared goals, tap into complementary expertise, leverage resources and create pathways for motivating research questions and pursuing real-world solutions.

Strategy 3: Uphold the highest standards of scientific integrity by implementing the administration's executive order on "Restoring Gold Standard Science." NSF will continue its legacy of scientific integrity to ensure research remains transparent, rigorous and impactful.

Measures:

- Number of patents resulting from NSF support. (Indicator)
- Number of research products from NSF awards deposited in public access repositories. (Indicator)

3. "Analysis of Federal Funding for Research and Development in 2022: Basic Research," NSF.

4. NSF adheres to Gold Standard Science principles as appropriate, given the breadth of science fields and the diverse research methodologies, in how it selects, funds, and oversees research. Learn more in Executive Order 14303 "Restoring Gold Standard Science." Read about NSF's [plans for implementing Gold Standard Science](#) or see NSF's [policy on scientific integrity](#).

AI can create bridges between humans and technological advances.

Credit: Alice Kitterman/U.S. National Science Foundation



Goal 1. Ensure American excellence and national security through investments in transformative research and innovation.

Objective 1.2. Advance the golden age of American innovation through the development of critical and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, quantum information science and biotechnology.⁵

NSF invests in research across all areas of science and technology, expanding human knowledge and unlocking new industries. NSF investments have powered advances in manufacturing, autonomous vehicles, next-generation wireless networks and systems, novel computational platforms and precision agriculture. Critical technologies have substantial potential impact on the economy and the United States' role within the competitive international technology space. In the face of intense global competition, NSF is uniquely positioned to advance critical and emerging technologies,⁶ and will leverage proven partnerships with a range of investors, including private industry, nonprofits and other ventures, along with flexible funding mechanisms that enable a wider range of organizations to participate.

Strategy 1: Empower a wide range of organizations and individuals to advance critical and emerging technologies through strategic investments. NSF will develop and promote funding opportunities in critical and emerging technologies, including AI, quantum information science and biotechnology.

Strategy 2: Strengthen America's leadership in critical and emerging technologies by competitively positioning the nation's talent for new jobs and industries. NSF will invest in industry-inspired instructional materials, professional development for teachers and faculty, and internship opportunities that lead to new stackable credentials, degree programs and experiential opportunities to position the nation's talent in critical and emerging technologies.

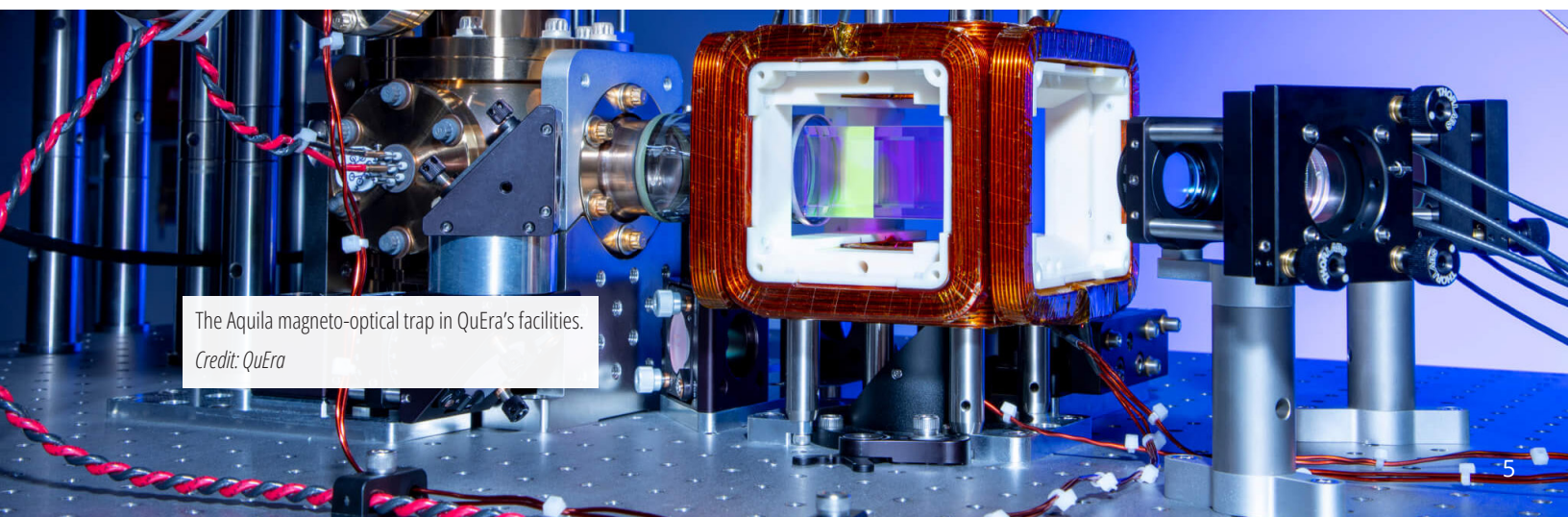
Strategy 3: Advance innovation in critical and emerging technologies by establishing and fortifying partnerships with government, private and nonprofit sectors. NSF will leverage the expertise and resources of these sectors to drive research informed by real-world use cases and to pilot market-ready solutions.

Measures:

- Funding leveraged from direct NSF partnerships that advance critical and emerging technologies. (Performance Goal)
- Number of startups in NSF's critical and emerging technology portfolio. (Indicator)

5. Critical and emerging technologies also include advanced manufacturing, advanced wireless and microelectronics and semiconductors as outlined by the Office of Science and Technology Policy and Office of Management and Budget: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/M-25-34-NSTM-2-Fiscal-Year-FY-2027-Administration-Research-and-Development-Budget-Priorities-and-Cross-Cutting-Actions.pdf>.

6. For example, NSF is the largest federal funder of artificial intelligence research and development.



The Aquila magneto-optical trap in QuEra's facilities.
Credit: QuEra

Goal 1. Ensure American excellence and national security through investments in transformative research and innovation.

Objective 1.3. Support national security by safeguarding the nation's research enterprise.

U.S. investment in research has built a cutting-edge science and technology enterprise grounded in openness, transparency, reciprocity, collaboration and integrity. These principles are increasingly threatened by inappropriate foreign influence seeking to misappropriate U.S.-funded research due to the connections between national defense, scientific innovations and the globalization of the research enterprise.⁷ As the largest federal funder of basic research in the U.S., NSF is committed to safeguarding the integrity and security of science while preserving the openness and collaboration that drive discovery and innovation. NSF shares this responsibility with partners in the federal government, law enforcement and intelligence communities as well as the broader U.S. and international research communities. Together, these partners will continue to develop and implement new research security policies and practices, ensuring that the United States remains a global leader.

Strategy 1: Safeguard the research community by promoting the use of research security information and tools to mitigate risks. NSF will extend the reach of the Safeguarding the Entire Community of the U.S. Research Ecosystem program,⁸ which provides research security-related information, tools and other resources to the research community through its network of partners. NSF will also continue to promote publicly available research security training to deepen the research community's understanding of research security concerns.

Strategy 2: Safeguard the integrity of NSF-funded research by identifying and mitigating malign foreign influence. NSF will expand its use of analytical tools to detect and adjudicate risks of undue foreign influence on potential awardees during the proposal review process and take actions to safeguard the integrity of federally funded research.

Measure:

- Enhance NSF's capacity to perform research security risk assessments. (Performance Goal)

7. JASON Report, "Safeguarding the Research Enterprise."

8. News release - NSF-backed SECURE Center will support research security, international collaboration <https://www.nsf.gov/news/nsf-backed-secure-center-will-support-research>.

A close-up of a precision optical test setup used to align and test miniature photonic components and on-chip laser sources for tunable laser development

Image Credit: Brightlight Photonics

Goal 1. Ensure American excellence and national security through investments in transformative research and innovation.

Objective 1.4. Support discovery, innovation and national security through impactful investments in research infrastructure.

Research infrastructure, including facilities, equipment and computational tools, enables cutting-edge discoveries and innovations that drive progress across disciplines. Yet the demand for operating time in some existing facilities and for new capabilities continues to outpace supply.⁹ Developing a sustainable approach to supporting research infrastructure is crucial to maintaining U.S. leadership in science and technology. NSF will prioritize research infrastructure investments to balance the operation and maintenance of existing research infrastructure with funding for new projects that advance national goals. NSF will continue to operate infrastructure in the Arctic and Antarctic, which will advance U.S. national security interests.

Strategy 1: *Maintain American leadership in scientific discovery and innovation and address national security needs by targeting research infrastructure investments.* NSF will target research infrastructure investments to meet evolving critical American science, innovation and national security needs by focusing on impactful, high-priority research infrastructure and, where appropriate, phasing out lower priorities through disposition.

Strategy 2: *Advance U.S. economic competitiveness by integrating nontraditional research infrastructure into NSF's portfolio.* NSF's research infrastructure portfolio will incorporate nontraditional projects such as test beds and virtual laboratories by tailoring existing mechanisms for design, construction and operation of major and mid-scale research infrastructure to support needs in key technology areas.

Strategy 3: *Amplify NSF investment in research infrastructure through strategic, policy-aligned partnerships to meet critical national needs.* NSF will strengthen the outcomes of its research infrastructure investments through partnerships to support the design, construction and operation of projects with dual-use applications to further priorities such as national security, AI, quantum information science and other mission-critical needs.

Measures:

- Percentage of NSF research infrastructure achieving facility uptime goals. (Performance Goal)
- Number of research translation activities in NSF-supported research infrastructure. (Indicator)

9. For example, the requests for time on the ALMA telescope are three times the amount available: [ALMA Observatory Factsheet](#).



Astrophotography taken on the NSF-DOE Rubin Observatory summit.
May 18, 2023
Credit: H. Stockebrand

Goal 2. Advance American leadership in science and technology by empowering STEM talent.

Objective 2.1. Support the growth of positions in critical and emerging technologies by developing the next-generation STEM workforce.

STEM-related fields employ 25% of the U.S. workforce, yet skill gaps and shortages persist in critical fields such as AI, quantum information science, advanced manufacturing and biotechnology.¹⁰ To maintain U.S. global supremacy in critical industries, federal investments must prioritize domestic talent development at all education and career levels nationwide, including skilled and trade workers. NSF has a track record of supporting research, scholarships, internships and other hands-on experiences proven to strengthen STEM pathways. To ensure that the U.S. remains at the forefront of science and technology, NSF will continue to pursue these evidence-based activities while rapidly developing and deploying innovative strategies.

Strategy 1: Prepare individuals for STEM careers in critical and emerging technologies by integrating formal and experiential learning opportunities. NSF will partner with business, industry and two- and four-year colleges to design programs that blend formal and experiential learning to train and educate Americans at all education and career stages, especially in scientific fields that are critical to economic and national security.

Strategy 2: Collaborate with industry to advance research-backed approaches that build skills and knowledge for successful careers. NSF will strengthen the STEM workforce by deploying and scaling research-backed approaches to attract, prepare, retain and advance Americans in STEM careers. NSF will work with industry and federal partners to create a coordinated workforce development system that enables current and future workers to meet evolving demands and lead in the future.

Strategy 3: Prepare the next generation of American STEM professionals by supporting research on innovation and technology-based teaching techniques. NSF will support American workers' transitions into critical, high-demand industries by investing in research to inform innovative approaches that build knowledge and skills through technologies like AI.

Measures:

- Proportion of funding in NSF flagship talent development initiatives allocated to critical and emerging technologies. (Performance Goal)
- Workers in STEM occupations as a percentage of the U.S. workforce. (Indicator)

10. "Bridging the future: Defining and empowering the STEM workforce of tomorrow" (NSF): <https://www.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/ige/updates/bridging-future-defining-empowering-stem-workforce-tomorrow>.



A close-up view of a build plate of test squares featuring the first sintered layer of three metals: stainless steel, Inconel and pure copper. The test squares demonstrated multi-material metal additive manufacturing using CIMP-3D's new selective powder deposition system.

Credit: SHAPE Lab, CIMP-3D and 3D Systems

Goal 2. Advance American leadership in science and technology by empowering STEM talent.

Objective 2.2. Expand opportunities for discovery and innovation by building STEM capacity across regions and a range of organizations, including community colleges, nonprofits and businesses.

To maintain its leadership in STEM discovery and innovation, the U.S. must further develop human capital, organizational capabilities and systemic connections. Strategic investments in organizations and regions over time can foster competitive innovation ecosystems and generate economic growth that benefits local, state, national and global research communities.¹¹ Building on its history of cultivating capabilities, forging alliances and sharing proven practices, NSF will prioritize engagement with organizations and jurisdictions seeking resources and partnerships.

Strategy 1: *Expand geographic coverage of the STEM enterprise by increasing the proportion of research funding to NSF Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (NSF EPSCoR) jurisdictions by 2029.* NSF will build on past capacity investments through new NSF EPSCoR funding opportunities that emphasize jurisdictional-level STEM goals. NSF will extend effective practices to new partnerships and regional networks while integrating annual funding goals for EPSCoR jurisdictions across all NSF programs.

Strategy 2: *Expand the STEM enterprise by creating opportunities for a range of organizations to access NSF resources.* NSF will create multiple entry points through capacity-building programs ranging from workshops to structured initiatives. NSF will improve access to resources and reduce barriers to participation by streamlining proposal and award processes.

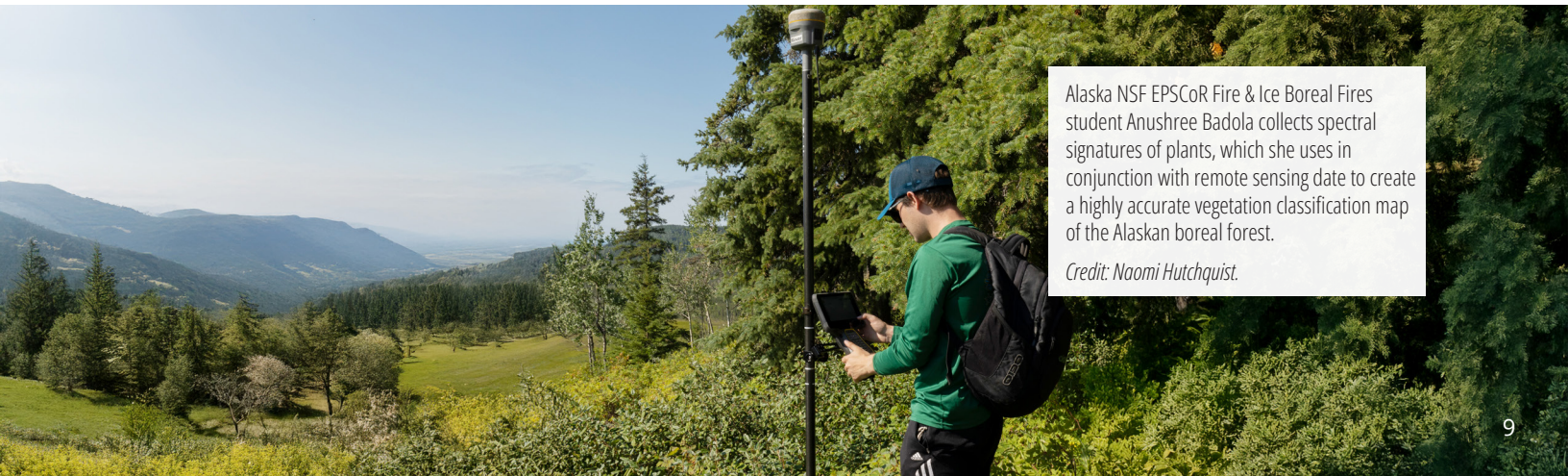
Strategy 3: *Reinforce STEM capacity by developing resources and facilitating collaborative practices across the STEM enterprise.* NSF will document and disseminate successful practices and guidance for translation and scaling, particularly from a range of organizations. NSF will also support the creation of platforms for knowledge sharing and mentorship, provide technical assistance and support accessible resource libraries with templates, guides and tools for organizations with limited capacity.

Measure:

- Proportion of NSF’s research funding to institutions in EPSCoR jurisdictions. (Performance Goal)¹²

11. “EPSCoR Report to Congress for FY 2024,” p. 13 (NSF): <https://nsf.gov/resources/nsf.gov/files/14-fy2026.pdf>.

12. The “CHIPS and Science Act of 2022” (P.L. 117-167) Sec.10325(a)(3) directs NSF to dedicate an increasing percentage of funds in key research and STEM accounts to institutions and local researchers in EPSCoR jurisdictions, as practicable and consistent with merit review.



Alaska NSF EPSCoR Fire & Ice Boreal Fires student Anushree Badola collects spectral signatures of plants, which she uses in conjunction with remote sensing data to create a highly accurate vegetation classification map of the Alaskan boreal forest.

Credit: Naomi Hutchquist.

Goal 3. Accelerate NSF’s impact by optimizing capability and modernizing operations.

Objective 3.1. Advance NSF’s mission by ensuring the agility and capability of the agency’s workforce.

To fulfill NSF’s mission, the agency must ensure the strength of its workforce. Like other federal agencies, NSF must address human capital challenges such as skills gaps and staffing in mission-critical positions.¹³ In keeping with the administration’s focus on reforming the federal hiring process,¹⁴ NSF will streamline human resources business processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Optimized, merit-based hiring practices will provide the agency with the talent needed to advance NSF’s mission. NSF requires an agile and optimized workforce to accomplish the agency’s strategic, operational and performance objectives. NSF will partner with other federal agencies to share best practices for ensuring an efficient and high-performing workforce.

Strategy 1: Secure top talent by making merit-based hiring efficient and effective. NSF will leverage government-wide tools and data analytics to enable merit-based hiring decisions, improve the NSF hiring experience, and ensure that managers are satisfied with NSF’s hiring process.

Strategy 2: Advance operational effectiveness by securing the skills needed to achieve the agency’s objectives. NSF will reskill its workforce and expand experiential learning opportunities to address competency gaps and evolving needs.

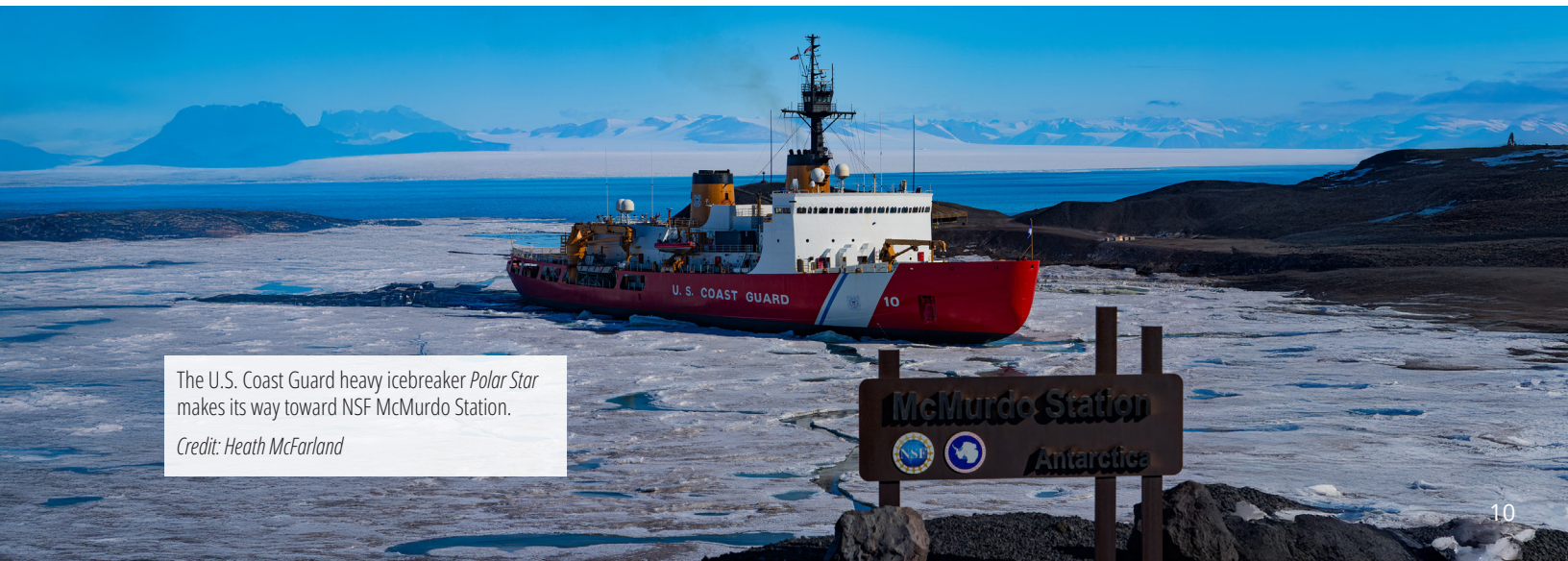
Strategy 3: Strengthen performance management to promote high-caliber work. NSF will provide supervisors with performance management tools to effectively manage teams and reward high performers.

Measure:

- Average number of calendar days to hire staff. (Performance Goal)

13. GAO, High Risk Series, “Heightened attention could save billions more and improve government efficiency and effectiveness,” p.4 <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-25-107743-highlights.pdf>.

14. Executive Order 14170, “Reforming the federal hiring process and restoring merit to government service.” <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/01/30/2025-02094/reforming-the-federal-hiring-process-and-restoring-merit-to-government-service>.



The U.S. Coast Guard heavy icebreaker *Polar Star* makes its way toward NSF McMurdo Station.

Credit: Heath McFarland

Goal 3. Accelerate NSF's impact by optimizing capability and modernizing operations.

Objective 3.2. Ensure accountable agency operations through Gold Standard Science and maintain effective use of federal funds.

NSF's policies and processes aim to fund scientific discovery efficiently and effectively, but have, at times, created barriers and burdens for the research community.¹⁵ To better serve NSF staff and the broader scientific community, NSF will streamline its policies and procedures, in line with appropriate tenets of Gold Standard Science. NSF will implement changes to its organizational structure and leverage technology to enhance operations in the proposal, merit review and award management life cycle. These changes will reduce administrative burdens and achieve resource efficiencies, while prioritizing the most impactful work to fund groundbreaking science and maintain global competitiveness.

Strategy 1: Reduce administrative burden by streamlining policies and processes. NSF will consolidate funding opportunities, streamline aspects of the proposal and award management system, and engage with the broad science and technology enterprise to foster understanding and collaboration around updated processes.

Strategy 2: Improve oversight of federal resources through enhanced accountability and transparency. NSF will improve its policies and procedures to increase accountability for its programs, resources and risks, aligning with the executive orders on achieving cost efficiencies¹⁶ and improving oversight of federal grantmaking¹⁷ NSF will also ensure all agency grant awards are consistent with NSF priorities and the national interest. NSF will strengthen procedures to ensure contractors are held accountable for results.

Strategy 3: Enhance operational efficiency by leveraging technologies and automation. NSF will leverage information technology systems, data, automation and AI to streamline operations and focus staff time on high-value work.

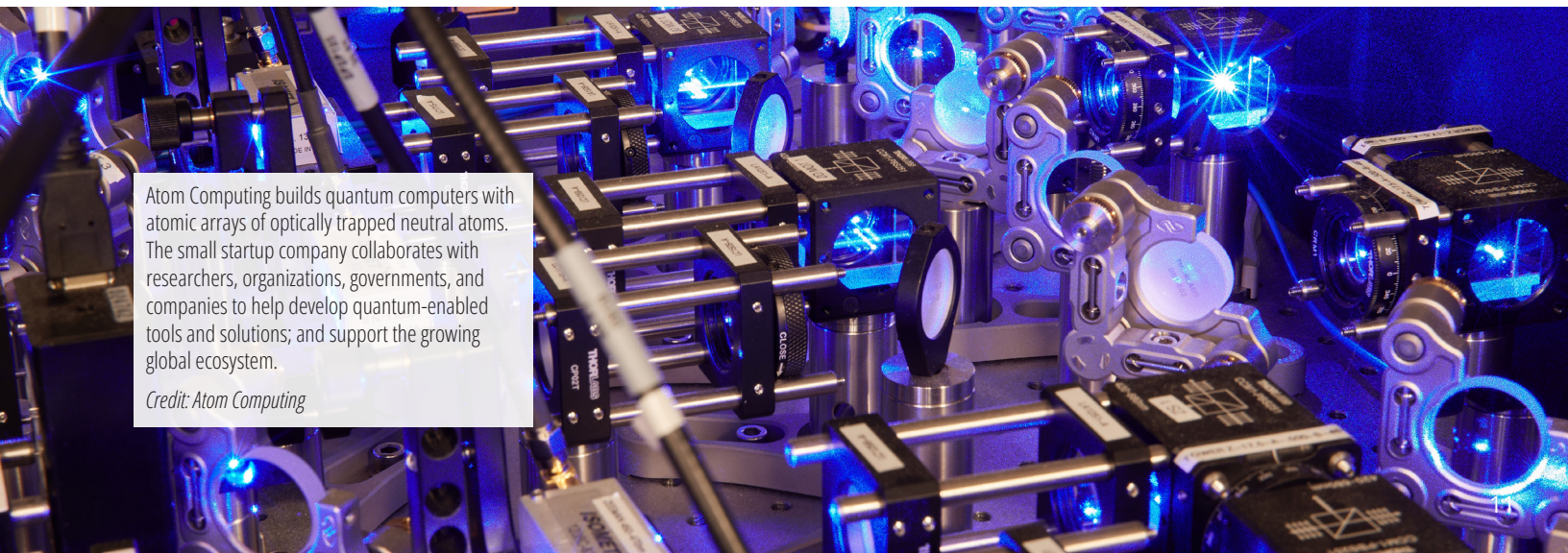
Measure:

- Reduce administrative burden on applicants and recipients of NSF funding (Agency Priority Goal).

15. Federal Demonstration Partnership "2018 faculty workload survey": <https://thefdp.org/wp-content/uploads/FDP-FWS-2018-Primary-Report.pdf>.

16. "Implementing the President's "Department of Government Efficiency" Cost Efficiency Initiative" executive order <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/03/03/2025-03527/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-cost-efficiency-initiative>.

17. "Improving oversight of federal grantmaking" executive order <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/08/12/2025-15344/improving-oversight-of-federal-grantmaking>.



Atom Computing builds quantum computers with atomic arrays of optically trapped neutral atoms. The small startup company collaborates with researchers, organizations, governments, and companies to help develop quantum-enabled tools and solutions; and support the growing global ecosystem.

Credit: Atom Computing

Crosscutting strategy for partnerships

Partnerships offer opportunities to amplify the economic and societal benefits of NSF's funding across the U.S. by accelerating scientific discovery and the translation of research to practice. Each of the objectives in Goals 1 and 2 is supported by partnering strategies. NSF partners directly with industrial, federal, nonprofit and international entities and catalyzes partnerships through programs that require grantees to work with non-academic partners. NSF is uniquely positioned to harness the strengths of higher education institutions, industry and nonprofits through partnerships and will leverage funding, complementary expertise and synergies across partners to advance the objectives outlined in *NSF's FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan*.

Measures:

- Number of new direct partners and partnerships. (Indicator)
- Funding leveraged from industry, nonprofit and federal partners. (Performance Goal)
- Number of NSF-catalyzed partners. (Indicator)

Agency priority goal

NSF has established a two-year agency priority goal (APG) in consultation with the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. The FY 2026-2027 APG will focus on ways to reduce administrative burden in alignment with Strategic Objective 3.2.

Goal leads:

- Chief Science Officer
- Head of Award Management

Impact statement

Streamline NSF's proposal and award management processes to reduce administrative burden on applicants and recipients of NSF awards and ensure maximum impact of taxpayer dollars.

Achievement statement

By Sept. 30, 2027, streamline two functions of the proposal and award management process to reduce burden on applicants and recipients of NSF awards, and ensure more efficient use of and greater accountability for public funds.

In alignment with Office of Science and Technology Policy Director Michael Kratsios' goal to reduce administrative burdens on federally funded researchers,¹⁸ NSF will streamline its policies and procedures over fiscal years 2026 and 2027 of this APG. These efforts will allow NSF to better support the broader science and technology community and ensure greater accountability for, and impact of, public funds. These efforts may include streamlining funding opportunities to remove repetitive and unnecessary language, reducing the documentation required during proposal submission to make it easier to apply, and partnering with other federal agencies to align requirements.

18. Remarks by Director Kratsios at the National Academies of Sciences, May 19, 2025 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2025/05/remarks-by-director-kratsios-at-the-national-academy-of-sciences/>.

Appendix: Contributing Programs

The table below demonstrates the connection between NSF's current programmatic activities and the strategic objectives.

NSF Programs	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	2.2	3.1	3.2
Biological Sciences	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Computer and Information Science and Engineering	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Engineering	X	X	X		X	X		
Geosciences	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Integrative Activities	X	X	X	X	X	X		
International Science and Engineering	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Mathematical and Physical Sciences	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Mission Support							X	X
Polar Programs	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Research Infrastructure	X			X				
Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences	X	X	X	X	X	X		
STEM Education			X		X	X		
Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships	X	X	X	X	X	X		

Appendix: Strategic learning goals and priority questions

The following strategic learning goals will frame NSF's efforts to build and use evidence to evaluate agency progress toward the strategic goals and objectives outlined in this plan. NSF's activities to answer these priority questions will result in evidence used to inform agency decisions related to policy, service delivery and operations. The strategic learning goals and FY 2027 priority questions are listed below:

- 1. How can NSF measure and assess the outcomes and impacts of its investments in U.S. research and innovation?**
 - 1.1. What data and methods may better measure and track enterprise outcomes and impacts of NSF investments?
 - 1.2. How can NSF better identify and mitigate research security risks across the science and technology enterprise?
- 2. How can NSF measure and evaluate progress made through its investments to empower STEM talent?**
- 3. How can NSF assess and increase its organizational capacity and effectiveness in modernizing its merit review process?**
 - 3.1. How effective have NSF merit review reforms been at reducing burden on applicants and improving NSF's operational efficiencies?