

National Science Foundation: Supporting Development of Center Culture

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NSF's larger investments

- Centers and Institutes

CO

- Facilities

- FFRDCs



Center programs at NSF: characteristics

- Flagship center programs started in 1980s
- Involve larger and long term investments (5 years or more)
- Primary focus on research and student education
- Managed by cooperative agreements
- Have extensive oversight (usually involving annual site visits)
- All Center programs, with exception of **Science and Technology Centers**, focus on specific areas of science and are housed in cognizant directorate



About Science and Technology Centers (STC) Program

- Opened to all areas of research supported by NSF
- Supports exceptionally innovative, complex research and education projects
- Focuses on creating new scientific paradigms, establishing new scientific disciplines and developing transformative technologies which have the potential for broad scientific and societal impact.
- STC concept
 - Partnership: academic institutions, national laboratories, industrial organization, NGOs, government, international organizations
 - Components: Research, education, knowledge transfer, diversity/inclusion, management structure



Science and Technology Centers (STC): Particulars

- Award mechanism: Cooperative agreement
- Lead institution is responsible for subawards
- Oversight: annual site visits (with external reviewers), additional reporting, semi-annual overview
- Budget: up to 6 million/year (potential duration 10 years award)
- Initial five-year award duration, renewal proposal and review of proposal in year four
- An STC competition involves 4 stages of external review and a final stage of internal review. Duration of a competition is two years.

Typical STC Profile

- Five or more institutional core partners, mostly academic
- Additional academic and non-academic partners
- 20-30 senior researchers
- 20-100 graduate students
- Undergraduate students and frequently some form of K-12 involvement
- Research teams are multidisciplinary



STC Program Requirements

- Awards are managed by cognizant directorates and the STC program
- Mandatory strategic planning at the beginning of the award
- External Advisory Board
- Annual site visits
- Participation in the STC directors' network
- Mandatory ethics training for all center participants
- STC program oversight strategy: flexibility and agility to empower different scientific cultures and keep up with rapidly changing landscape of science.

