



National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230

NSF 10-069

Dear Colleague Letter for SBE 2020: Future Research in the Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the social, behavioral, and economic sciences face extraordinary opportunities to address next-generation research challenges. The landscape is vast and complex, stretching across temporal and spatial dimensions and multiple levels of analysis -- from studying the human brain to implications of decision making in a dynamic and fragmented yet interconnected world. As we look forward 10 or even 20 years, the Directorate for the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences of the National Science Foundation (NSF/SBE) seeks to frame innovative research for the year 2020 and beyond that enhances fundamental knowledge and benefits society in many ways.

This request is part of a process that will help NSF/SBE make plans to support future research. Other activities will include a report by the Directorate's Advisory Committee about the grand challenges facing the SBE sciences over the next decade and recommendations from the Directorate's staff. The insights resulting from this process are threefold: They will inform the substance of future research, the capacities to pursue that research, and the infrastructure to enable investigations that will be increasingly interdisciplinary and international and will involve multiple perspectives and intellectual frameworks, differing scales and contexts, and diverse approaches and methodologies.

As a first step in engaging its community, NSF/SBE invites individuals and groups to contribute white papers outlining grand challenge questions that are both foundational and transformative. They are foundational in the sense that they reflect deep issues that engage fundamental assumptions behind disciplinary research traditions and are transformative because they seek to leverage current findings to unlock a new cycle of research. We expect these white papers to advance SBE's mission to study human characteristics and human behaviors in its Social and Economic Sciences and Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences divisions, as well as to be the nation's resource for understanding the structure and development of science through its Science Resources Statistics division. These white papers must:

- Explain the challenge question, capability to be created, or scientific strategy; provide context in terms of recent research results and standing questions in the field; suggest the range of disciplines that may contribute, and indicate the implications for future research within and across disciplines.
- Limit the white paper to 2,000 words with a 200-word maximum abstract and up to 3 references to relevant readings.
- Include a Creative Commons *Attribution Non-Commercial Share Alike* license (<http://creativecommons.org/about/licenses/>) so that the material may be made widely available through the web.
- Arrive by September 30, 2010 in a Microsoft Word-compatible format. Submit to: http://www.nsf.gov/sbe/sbe_2020/.

NSF/SBE plans to use these contributions over the next year to assist in formulating plans that will guide its strategic scientific thinking. Consequently, we anticipate making all abstracts and papers accessible through the SBE 2020 website. Authors who do not wish to have their papers made available through the website may restrict access to NSF staff. However, the author(s), title, and abstract will be included in the publicly accessible corpus.

Research is cumulative and progress is at times necessarily incremental. We invite you, now, to step outside of present demands and to think boldly about future promises. We await your contributions to understanding the future of SBE science.

Sincerely,
Myron Gutmann
Assistant Director
Directorate for the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences