

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE VIEWPOINT SURVEY (FEVS)

- FY13 ACTION PLAN -



VERSION 1.0

January 2013

INTRODUCTION

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is committed to being among the best places to work in the federal government. The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results confirm many of the positive aspects of NSF: our staff is highly motivated; we put in extra effort when needed to get the job done; we are constantly looking for ways to do our jobs better; and we know the work we do is important. Our workforce is excited about our mission and knows that the results from awards we make inspire the imagination while advancing the progress of science, contributing to a prosperous and secure nation. At the same time, the FEVS identifies areas where employee perceptions do not demonstrate the level of organizational excellence to which we all aspire.

The FEVS provides us one tool for assessing our employees' perceptions of their work environment. NSF has participated in the FEVS since its inception. While the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administered survey and the publically available results cover only full-time, permanent staff responses, we administer the survey to our entire workforce, including those on temporary appointments and Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) assignments. Each year, we request disaggregated results from OPM in order to gain a better understanding of localized differences in perceptions. In 2011, we were able to get data at the directorate and major office level and, in 2012, to the division level. This disaggregation allows us to better target action strategies to particular challenge areas. Results of the FEVS have also been made available to staff and other interested stakeholders at (http://www.nsf.gov/about/career_opps/).

The NSF Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) has briefed several groups on the analyses done to date, including NSF's senior management, Union leadership and the National Science Board. As in the past, NSF's senior management has discussed action strategies to address some of the clear challenges identified by the data. Some specific actions are reflected in the NSF-wide Action Plan found in Appendix B.

However, we recognize that management led actions alone will not be enough to effect the types of changes in employee engagement and satisfaction desired. To be successful, NSF must encourage two-way dialogue, foster a commitment to change within the entire workforce, better understand the issues at hand, and build shared responsibility for developing action strategies to effect change. As such, this plan – designated Version 1.0 – serves only as a starting point. NSF will continually update it as priorities, resources, and planning activities are more clearly defined. In addition, while this plan focuses on NSF-wide actions, individual organizational units (i.e., directorates and offices) will be working to understand the FEVS results at the local level and to develop and implement actions to address challenges specific to those units.

We will continue to use the FEVS results to identify and inform subsequent actions both in areas where improvements are clearly needed and in areas where we have seen successes or improvements. We will continue to analyze the results to better determine where differences of opinion across employee groups are significant and will probe issue areas through other means where FEVS results may not be entirely clear. In order to target our limited resources and to take immediate action in areas where the

results are clear, the Action Plan focuses on challenge areas suggested by the FEVS results (highlighted in Appendix A). The target areas may change as we receive additional input from NSF staff.

THE NSF ACTION PLAN: WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE NSF THE PLACE WE WANT IT TO BE

No plan designed primarily by management to meet a requirement of OPM and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) can address the underlying messages sent by our employees through the 2012 and earlier FEVS results. A truly effective approach to action planning requires in-depth involvement of NSF staff from the start. We intend this plan, Version 1.0, to be a high level framework to guide future actions. It is to be a living document that will change and grow as employees participate in its development and implementation.

Both the analyses and the feedback provided by managers and employees in the FEVS and related contexts point to the following as critical factors for making NSF the place we want it to be:

- Shared respect for one another;
- Shared vision for advancing our mission;
- Shared understanding of expectations for and value of contributions in advancing NSF's mission; and
- Shared commitment to improving the NSF work environment.

Shared respect, vision, understanding, and commitment require sharing openly the wide range of perceptions around workplace challenges at NSF. This will demand joint engagement of both employees and leadership in developing solutions and implementing actions through enhanced transparency and two-way communication.

We need answers to questions like the following:

- What are effective ways to ensure communication flows effectively two ways and that important information is received and, as needed, acted upon?
- What are effective ways to create dialogue across affected groups within NSF when changes are pending?
- What informal approaches to sharing ideas might we try where formal approaches have failed?
- How do we balance the need to know where input on sensitive topics is coming from with concerns by the source that there might be negative consequences to sharing?
- Where do we draw the lines for information that cannot be shared due to confidentiality requirements and how do we do that consistently?

Our first and primary action for this Action Plan is to initiate the NSF-wide and directorate, office, and division level conversations that will lead to joint creation of solutions and joint actions.

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION PLANNING

JOINT ENGAGEMENT OF EMPLOYEES, MANAGERS, AND LEADERS

Establishing two-way communication and collaboration mechanisms will be critical to devising solutions, action planning, incorporating feedback, sharing successes and challenges, and ultimately improving NSF as a place to work. Actions described in Appendix B will help create the environment to better understand underlying issues, develop joint solutions, and take joint actions.

EMPOWERING ALL NSF EMPLOYEES TO BE THEIR BEST: FEVS DATA SUGGESTED FOCUS AREAS

The FEVS results reveal both challenges and strengths in areas known from research to be important to employee satisfaction and employee effectiveness. These include four areas where NSF has initiated action in the past aimed at improving the NSF climate: workload, performance management and recognition, career development, and career-life balance. The FEVS is an important set of indicators to be used, along with other tools and information, to address our commitment at NSF to continual improvement of the workplace culture and climate. Actions that have proven effective or have not had sufficient time to determine the impact will be continued. These actions are largely focused on management-led, NSF-wide activities that can continue with minor adjustments while more extended discussions occur with the workforce. An additional set of actions, based on an analysis of the disaggregated data, will be implemented to target the specific challenges of NSF organizational units.

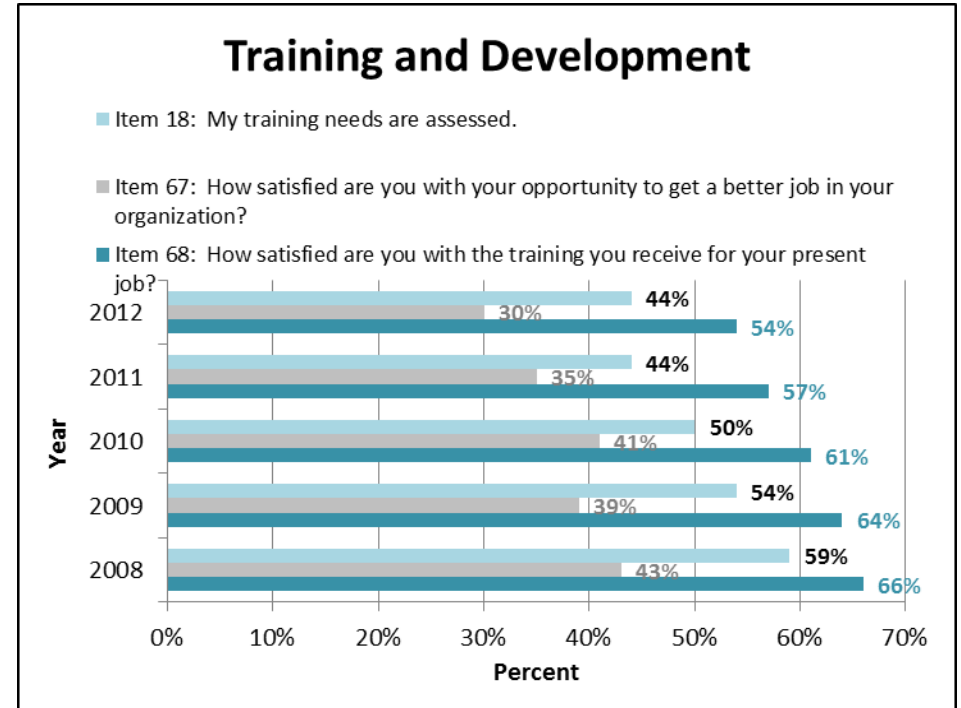
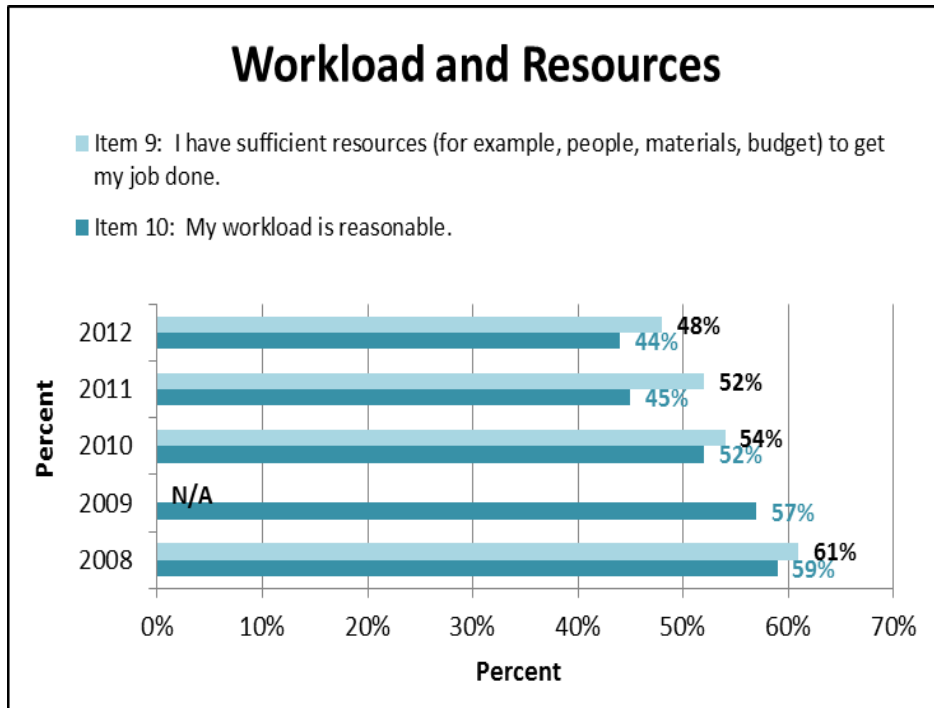
- 1) **Workload** – Although NSF employees believe the workforce has the right knowledge and skills to accomplish the Foundation’s goals, workload continues to be the area with the largest unfavorable discrepancy between NSF and the government-wide average. NSF will continue its workload modeling efforts and some experimental activities aimed at controlling workload, while more in-depth discussions get at the nature of the dissatisfaction.
- 2) **Career Development** – FEVS data indicate a continued downward trend in training and development indicators, including assessment of training needs and specific training to improve job performance, as well as opportunities for better jobs within NSF.
- 3) **Performance Management and Recognition** – Our 2012 survey results revealed some encouraging increases related to performance management, which the Foundation attributes to improving performance management training for supervisors and employees and to implementing performance management for IPAs. However, some FEVS indicators and anecdotal evidence from employees and management indicate that performance management and related rewards and recognition require continued improvement.
- 4) **Career-Life Balance** – Like most organizations in both the Federal government and the private sector, we have spent the past several years placing a strong emphasis on the importance of career-life balance. As such, the Foundation has supported telework and other career-life initiatives geared toward improving morale and employee satisfaction, and we plan to continue to improve these areas.

RELATED RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES

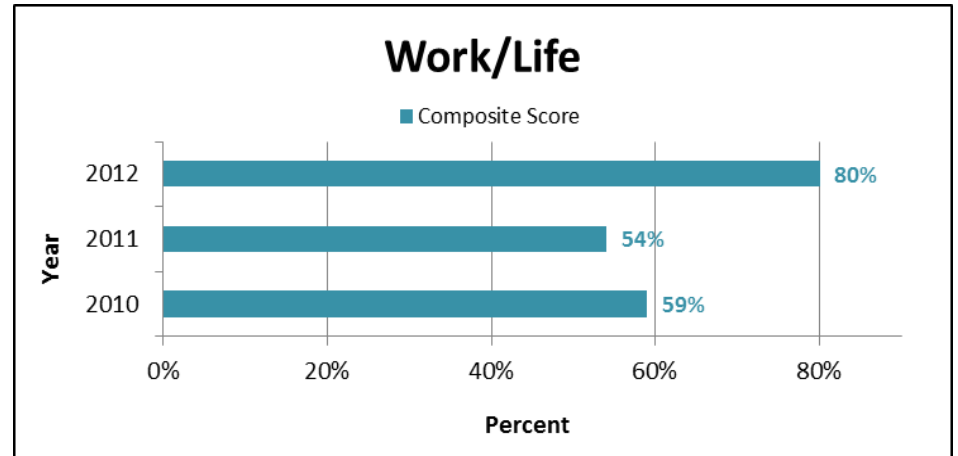
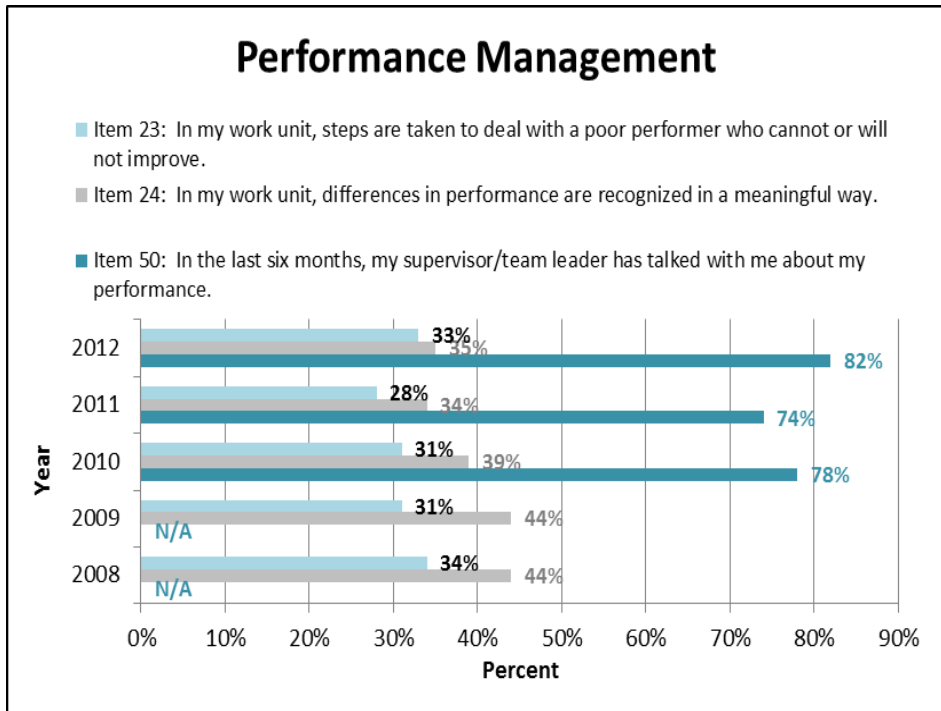
Whether targeted at the Foundation or organizational unit level, our FEVS FY13 Action Plan improvement activities are geared toward making the Foundation among the best places to work for our employees. In addition to the agency-wide Action Plan, directorates and offices are reviewing, analyzing, and interpreting FEVS findings at the local level. Preparing organization specific action plans and implementing activities focused on improving culture and climate at the organization level will allow us to address local issues in a timelier manner. Reviewing successful activities for scalability across NSF will then allow us to implement proven best practices that will more effectively address the overall NSF climate. As such, senior leaders, managers, and employees are encouraged to participate in the action planning efforts and integrate agency and local activities through ongoing communication and collaboration and the sharing of best practices. Additionally, the resources and initiatives identified in this Action Plan can and should be integrated with related NSF initiatives, including the agency's Strategic Plan, the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plans, and directorate/office specific plans.

APPENDIX A: SUGGESTED FOCUS AREAS

Focus Area related results from the FEVS are shown below:



Focus Area related results from the FEVS are shown below (continued):



*NOTE: In 2012, the work/life program satisfaction ratings only include employees who indicated that they participate in the specific work/life program. The 2011 work/life program satisfaction data has been recalculated for comparison purposes.

APPENDIX B: NSF-WIDE ACTIONS

Focus Area	Activities	Leadership & Participation
I. COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION		
Joint Engagement of Employees, Managers and Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leveraging work previously completed, such as the 2011 NSF Communications Task Force, create NSF-wide protocols for employee engagement at all levels and engage the workforce in discussions to understand challenges to engagement and action in the four focus areas. The protocols will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) ensure increased transparency and two-way communications in decision processes that affect the workplace; (2) ensure all NSF employees have the information and opportunity for input they need to do their work effectively; and (3) ensure appropriate confidentiality when needed. • Link the communications and engagement protocols to the next stages of development of all action planning processes, including the NSF FEVS engagement action plan, the NSF Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan and the NSF Strategic Plan. • Create an open, transparent process for reporting on progress to all NSF employees that ensures periodic leadership discussion and the opportunity for course correction. Potentially use HRStat performance reviews as an official progress tracking and reporting tool. • Revitalize the Labor Management Forum. • Document and share details regarding promising practices from local action planning among directorates and offices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OD, with primary support from OLPA and OIRM/CHCO, in consultation with SMaRT, DADEO, directorates and offices, and AFGE Local 3403. • OD, with primary support from OLPA and OIRM/CHCO, in consultation with SMaRT, DADEO directorates and offices, and AFGE Local 3403. • OD, with primary support from OLPA and OIRM/CHCO. Use all communications tools available to report on progress to all of NSF. • OD, OIRM and AFGE Local 3403 • ADs and DADEOS

APPENDIX B: NSF-WIDE ACTIONS

Focus Area	Activities	Leadership & Participation
II. FEVS IDENTIFIED CHALLENGE AREAS		
Workload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue and expand experimental/pilot approaches to managing program workload. • Identify management operations that can be automated to reduce administrative burdens and lay out an automation plan. Implement as resources allow. • Conceptualize and implement local level changes in program management targeting workload reduction. Share promising practices across organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OIIA, BFA, and directorates and program offices. • OIRM in consultation with DADEO group, BFA, and others. • ADs and DADEOS
Career Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a plan to address highest priority training, as per the Training Needs Assessment completed in 2012. Widely publicize the results of the Assessment and steps being taken to improve training at NSF. • Develop training for supervisors and employees on how to have effective discussions around career development and training needs. Add a career development discussion requirement to the performance management system. • Conduct a year-long campaign to identify viable career paths for all major groups of NSF employees with concomitant skill assessments and training and a focus on expanding current effective practices more widely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OIRM/HRM Academy and ITO • OIRM/HRM Academy and ITO • OIRM/HRM in collaboration with all directorates and offices; builds on SMaRT assignment to CHCO

APPENDIX B: NSF-WIDE ACTIONS

Focus Area	Activities	Leadership & Participation
III. ONGOING IMPROVEMENT		
Performance Management & Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to improve performance management training for supervisors and employees and expand participation in the training. • Explore mechanisms to improve NSF performance management systems and processes. • Review and make improvements to NSF-wide and local recognition programs, with particular attention to the Director's Awards. • Add a supervisor responsibility performance element to all supervisor performance plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OIRM/HRM and directorates and offices; in collaboration with AFGE Local 3403 • OIRM/HRM, directorates and offices, AFGE Local 3403. • OD with support from OIRM/HRM, directorates and offices, AFGE Local 3403 • OIRM/HRM and directorates and offices
Career-Life Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update a suite of policies and option in support of career-life balance, including the telework policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OIRM/HRM and AFGE Local 3403

Key: AD – Assistant Director; AFGE Local 3403 – American Federation of Government Employees (NSF representative union); BFA – Office of Budget and Finance Administration; CHCO – Chief Human Capital Officer; DADEO – Deputy Assistant Director and Executive Officer group; HRM – Division of Human Resources Management; ITO – Instructional Technologies Office; OD – Office of the Director; OIRM – Office of Information and Resource Management; OIIA – Office of International and Integrative Activities; OLPA – Office of Legislative and Public Affairs; SMaRT – Senior Management Round Table