

January 27, 2026

National Science Foundation
Randolph Building
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA22314

RE: Response to Dear Colleague Letter on FY 2026-2027 NSF Strategic Plan

1. *What opportunities exist that could help enable progress toward NSF's objectives and strategies?*

This response is in relation to Goal 2. Advance American leadership in science and technology by empowering STEM talent, Strategy 3 of Objective 2.1.

A key strength of the NSF is the agency's role in training the next generation of scientists. The NSF offers an array of training opportunities that support future innovators through summer research experiences (REUs) that prepare undergraduate students for graduate school, and merit based Graduate Research Fellowships (GRFPs) that support master's and doctoral students with exceptional potential. These programs not only prepare the next generation for independent research positions, they train creative, innovative thinkers who drive scientific progress across sectors and ensure that the next generation has the appropriate scientific fitness to succeed as productive scientists. Many scientists trained from these programs have gone on to create biotechnology companies that have expanded the U.S. scientific enterprise. For instance, co-founders of Ginkgo Bioworks, a synthetic biology company, began their research careers with funding from the GRFP program. The ASBMB strongly suggests that NSF continue to prioritize the REU and GRFP training programs, restoring recent cuts which have left both programs unable to support an extraordinarily large number of highly qualified applicants.

2. *How might NSF foster partnerships with a wide range of organizations to implement the strategies in its FY 2026-2030 Strategic Plan?*

This response is in relation to Goal 1. Ensure American excellence and national security through investments in transformative research and innovation, Strategy 2 of Objective 1.1.

Across multiple federal science agencies are public-private partnerships that train junior scientists in entrepreneurship such as the I-Corps at NSF. The I-Corps program works with industry partners in regional hubs, including universities, local and regional businesses, to streamline translational research to the public. These partnerships are fertile grounds for cultivating stronger relationships between academia, government, and the private sector and present an opportunity to train new scientists. However, partnerships between academic basic science researchers and the private sector discovery teams are often left out from these programs.

The ASBMB recommends that NSF foster partnerships by developing specific public-private funding mechanisms and training programs that include more basic science researchers at the onset of training will help close the gap between knowledge gained between basic science research and translational research.

3. *(Optional) Please provide your affiliation or other context that will help NSF understand your response.*

For example, you may describe your role in science, research, education, policy, etc., the name of any organization you represent, your approximate location (e.g., state or region), or how you interact with NSF. These details may help NSF analyze your feedback and allow us to more effectively apply your input as we implement the Strategic Plan.

The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) is a nonprofit professional society that builds and empowers a broad community of molecular life scientists advancing discovery. Its community comprises 11,000 members, including researchers and science educators, ranging from senior scientists to students. ASBMB advocates for strengthening the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) workforce, and supports robust, sustained funding for the U.S. research enterprise.

The ASBMB appreciates the opportunity to submit a response to the Dear Colleague Letter on FY 2026-2027 NSF Strategic Plan. As the country's only federal agency that funds all disciplines of basic science research, it is imperative that NSF adhere to its mission to drive forward basic science research to fuel to country's innovation and scientific enterprise. Without federally funded basic science research from NSF, the country would not be able to maintain our leadership role in science and technology.

Current and past NSF funded training programs have resulted in thousands of researchers pursuing groundbreaking research in universities, national laboratories, starting biotechnology companies, and translating discoveries in private industry. It is important for NSF to prioritize scientific training and workforce development so that the country stays competitive.