

NSF PARTNERSHIPS — INTERVIEW PROTOCOL PROJECT PIs AND OTHER RESEARCHERS (PRIVATE INDUSTRY PARTNER)

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us regarding the {RESEARCH PROJECT}. As we indicated in our earlier note, we are doing an evaluation of some of NSF's programs that are jointly funded by NSF and private industry. Our study involves comparing projects conducted under such partnership programs with projects, addressing similar research topics, funded by NSF. We've asked to speak with you as part of our effort to get a better understanding of how your company supported {NAME OF PROGRAM} in general, and the {PROJECT NAME} in particular.

1. **To get started we'd like to know more about how you were involved in the {PROGRAM NAME}. Specifically:**
 - When did your involvement with {PROGRAM NAME} begin (in relation to the creation and design/development/implementation of the program)?
 - What was your role on {PROGRAM NAME} and how long did your participation last?
 - If not mentioned above, How many grants funded under {PROGRAM NAME} did you work with?

Thank you. That is helpful.

[Depending on the answer to bullet 2 above, go either to the Program Level below or skip to the Project Level]

PROGRAM LEVEL

Note: This section applies to the treatment group and the industry partner's involvement at the *program* level.

Now we would like to ask you few questions regarding the **{NAME OF PROGRAM}**, its goals, how it was structured (beyond the joint funding of research), and its activities.

2. Can you tell me a little bit about the **{NAME OF PROGRAM}, specifically the goals of the program and what was hoped to be achieved through it?**

[Probe] Ask about the alignment of program goals with industry partnership goals and priorities]

Now, I'd like to learn a little bit more about how the **{NAME OF PROGRAM}** was structured and managed.

3. What are the areas/activities that your company collaborated on in the management of the **{NAME OF PROGRAM}? How did these collaborations work?**

[Probe] Ask about engagement and the roles of the company for each of these activities:

- Writing the solicitation
- Conducting reviews of proposals
- Making award recommendations/decisions
- Monitoring projects' progress

4. How did this collaboration work out?

[Probe] Were there any challenges in partnering with NSF in any of the areas? If yes, what were they? [Probe for the following challenges]

- Industry was not involved equally in decision making,
- Activities between NSF and industry were not well coordinated,
- Adequate communication between NSF and industry were lacking,
- Lack of resources and time]

5. Did you find there was any added value in these areas of having the partnership? If yes, please explain

[Probe] Ask about potential areas of added value

- Different/enhanced pool of applicants
- Better/more innovative proposals
- Expansion of the types of research questions being addressed or approaches for addressing them

PROJECT LEVEL

Note: This section applies to industry partners who interacted directly with {NAME OF PROJECT} and is relevant to both industry partners involved in funding the program and partners who may have been included in the research team(in either the treatment or comparison projects.

6. Can you tell me a little bit about the {PROJECT NAME}, specifically the goals of the project and what the project was hoping to achieve?

7. For which areas/activities did you collaborate with {PROJECT NAME}?

[Probe] Ask about the following potential areas of interaction:

- Advising or collaborating with researchers
- Informing decisions on changes to research projects
- Offering supports, such as providing researchers to be part of the project team or access to its technology, infrastructure, or sites
- Providing opportunities to researchers, such as retreats or related interactions
- Providing supports for dissemination of project findings and products

[Probe] Ask for each area that is mentioned: **Can you give me some specific examples of how this was done?**

8. How were the activities coordinated between you and the research staff at {PROJECT NAME}? How well did this coordination work?

9. How well did you with communicate with the research staff at {PROJECT NAME}?

[Probe] Ask about frequency of communication and mode]

10. Overall, how would you describe the engagement of the researchers on {PROJECT NAME} with you?

11. How did you monitor your activities on {PROJECT NAME} and their outcomes?

12. Can you identify any particular benefits that you feel resulted from providing support to {PROJECT NAME}?

[Probe] Ask about the following for potential areas of added value:

- Building broader research communities/networks of researchers
- Allowing for interdisciplinary approaches/multiple perspectives/transformational approaches/different methodologies
- Accelerating discovery and innovation
- Accelerating transition from basic research to product
- Providing new opportunities for career development
- Disseminating findings to a broad and diverse audience

13. Were there any challenges in partnering with {PROJECT NAME} researchers? If yes, what were they? How did you try to overcome them?

[Probe] Ask about the following challenges]

- Burdens
- Conflict between priorities
- Disagreement on intellectual property]
- Lack of clarity surrounding roles
- Lack of reliable access to {PROJECT NAME}

CONCLUSION

14. Are there areas that you think NSF could change to promote better collaboration between industry partners and researchers on research projects?

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Thank you for taking the time to talk with us about this work. Your insights have been very helpful.