



PSP Submission to National Science Foundation 2014 – 2018 Strategic Plan: Investing in Science, Engineering, and Education for the Nation’s Future

September 27, 2016

The Professional and Scholarly Publishing Division of the Association of American Publishers (AAP/PSP) appreciates the opportunity to provide a brief comment on the National Science Foundation’s (NSF’s) Strategic Plan as it relates to expanding access to high-quality peer-reviewed publications that report on NSF-funded research.

AAP/PSP is the major US trade association for professional and scholarly publishers; like NSF, our 130+ members are guided by a commitment to supporting a high-quality research enterprise. The majority of our members are non-profit professional societies that represent researchers, including those funded by NSF, and all of our members publish authors who receive NSF grant funding. AAP/PSP members focus on creating and preserving the best scholarly communication, validated through peer review and disseminated worldwide to inspire new avenues of thought and advance discovery and innovation. This effort is consistent with and supports NSF’s values of scientific excellence and accountability.

In the 2014-2018 strategic plan, Strategic Goal 1 (G1), to “Transform the Frontiers of Science and Engineering,” recognizes the importance of research infrastructure. In fact, Strategic Objective 3 under that goal acknowledges the need to support “tools and capabilities to keep the Nation’s research enterprise at the global forefront.” While the narrative focuses on facilities and physical equipment, NSF should also acknowledge the need for a robust information infrastructure to enable discoveries to be validated and communicated to the broader scholarly community and the public.

PSP members publish the vast majority of materials used in the U.S. by scholars and other professionals in the sciences and other areas of scholarship, and they are the worldwide disseminators, archivists and shapers of the scholarly record in both print and electronic form. They make significant intellectual contributions and investments that improve the quality, discoverability and availability of peer-reviewed articles and other publications. The often-invisible infrastructure they provide is the scaffolding that enables researchers and other readers to discover, analyze and link to the latest breakthroughs and developments in scholarly research. NSF should recognize these contributions and keep them in mind as a linchpin to achieving the goals articulated in the strategic plan.

Publishers have never sought direct support from NSF for these investments but rather request that NSF carefully consider how its policies and grantee requirements may affect the sustainability of the scholarly communication ecosystem. The Foundation funds research in a wide range of disciplines, research that is undertaken by many different communities. NSF’s policies, and in particular the NSF Public Access Plan, will have a wide-ranging impact on the practice of research in many scholarly communities. It is critical that NSF allow grantees to publish in the journal that best suits their needs,

and also allow research communities to determine the business models and publishing practices that enable them to best communicate their findings. One size does not fit all. Any unilateral approach to funding, embargoes or licensing will not be able to accommodate the differences between and among research communities and modes of research communication.

In short, the Strategic Plan should call for flexible and cautious approaches to the issue of access to publications. At the highest level, the need for a robust, diverse and sustainable scholarly communication ecosystem should be recognized as critical to the success of NSF's mission and the effectiveness of its research investments. AAP-PSP, together with the International Association of STM Publishers, submitted more detailed comments specifically regarding NSF's Public Access Plan: ([http://publishers.org/sites/default/files/uploads/PSP/rfc_nsf_proposal_and_award_policies_and_procedures_guide .pdf](http://publishers.org/sites/default/files/uploads/PSP/rfc_nsf_proposal_and_award_policies_and_procedures_guide.pdf)), which may be helpful as you consider the impact of this and other policies on research communication.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this comment. Publishers of scientific and medical journals have, for more than 100 years, played an integral role in building and documenting the U.S. scientific research enterprise. Our members see themselves as integral partners with the scholarly research community in the U.S. and with NSF as it seeks to promote research and innovation. We look forward to continuing this collaborative relationship throughout the implementation of the current strategic plan and in the future.

Sincerely,

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