Broader impacts are defined as the societal benefits of the research. BI can also be viewed as the return on taxpayer's investment in research. A requirement to explain the "significance" or impact of the funded research is found in various degrees across all federal funding agencies, including NSF, the National Institutes of Health, and the USDA.

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The National Alliance for Broader Impacts (of Funded Research)

Folks:
The posting below describes the important work of a new organization to help researchers make the case for the broader societal impact of their proposed work, something that is now almost universally required for external funding. It is by Dr. Susan D. Renoe, University of Missouri and Kaye Storm, Stanford University.

Regards,
Rick Reis
reis@stanford.edu

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Tomorrow's Research

---------- 1,018 words ---------

The National Alliance for Broader Impacts (of Funded Research)

If you have submitted a proposal for funding to the National Science Foundation (NSF), then you should be familiar with the term broader impacts (BI). Broader impacts are defined as the societal benefits of the research. BI can also be viewed as the return on taxpayer's investment in research. A requirement to explain the "significance" or impact of the funded research is found in various degrees across all federal funding agencies, including NSF, the National Institutes of Health, and the USDA. Unfortunately, guidance in formulating BI statements and programming is lacking.

With this deficit in mind, the National Alliance for Broader Impacts1 (NABI) was formed in 2014 with support from the NSF2 to develop institutional capacity and engagement in BI activity. A national network comprised of universities, professional societies and informal science organizations, NABI is a community of practice focused on the development, implementation, and evaluation of science communication and public engagement programming—generally designed to meet NSF's BI criterion. Currently, there are 344 individual members of NABI from more than 120 institutions.

All are welcome to join NABI, free of charge. We are currently only offering individual memberships so members can continue their affiliation even if they change institutions. An ongoing benefit of NABI membership is the sharing of BI resources and knowledge. The increased emphasis on the BI criterion has led to the creation of campus-wide BI offices, such as the Broader Impacts Network at the University of Missouri3. BI offices are charged with aiding researchers in the design, implementation, and evaluation of their broader impacts activities. However, not all institutions have broader impacts offices, and NABI resources are available to anyone who needs them—regardless of affiliation. Sharing resources and experience across the network allows for effective use of time and resources—both of which are in high demand.

NABI also provides periodic, in-depth BI trainings that are open to anyone who is interested in broader impacts in theory and in practice—including students, faculty, staff, administrators, and non-academic individuals and organizations. For instance, the University of Missouri hosted a Broader Impacts Intensive Training in the fall of 2015 that included information on the BI criterion and how to address it, information on evaluation and assessment of BI plans, as well as break-out sessions on specific BI topics such as using the web effectively in your BI strategy and working with K12 teachers. This year's Broader Impacts Intensive Training will be October 22-.
Involvement with NABI also gives members the chance to contribute directly to the national discussion on the future of BI, including speaking to NSF as a unified voice of the BI community. One such outlet is the annual Broader Impacts Summit, organized by NABI, which provides professional development opportunities for BI support professionals and a forum for discussing issues surrounding BI. As an example of its impact, the 2014 Summit was the site of Dr. France Córdova’s first public talk after being confirmed as NSF Director, where she stressed the need for researchers to stay relevant to the people who are funding them. The Summit was also heavily featured in the NSF Perspectives on Broader Impacts publication, in which NSF stresses the importance of BI to its mission and the importance of a national network to help advance that mission.

The third NABI Summit was held April 29-May 1, 2015 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Over 115 registrants from 60 different universities, institutes, centers, and private companies were represented during the three-day summit. There were keynote speeches by Dr. Wanda Ward, head of NSF’s Office of International and Integrative Activities, Dr. Pramod Khargonekar, head of the NSF Engineering Directorate and Dr. Bob Mathieu of the Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, and Learning (CIRTL) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For the first time, a pre-conference session was offered, providing sessions, such as “Setting up a Broader Impacts Office: Questions from a University. Answers from NABI Offices,” using the collective wisdom of pre-existing BI programs to brainstorm ways to create sustainable BI programming. Networking receptions and working lunches focused on creating a tight-knit BI community and increasing the dialogue among BI professionals. NABI working groups met to discuss new directions in recognizing the work of BI professionals and organizations; NABI web presence; functionality of Trellis, the new social networking platform being developed by AAAS; and recommendations for the quality review of broader impacts statements in research proposals.

NABI has many plans for the future—1) to continue to facilitate communication between researchers and federal funding agencies around the realities of implementing the BI criterion; 2) to grow the BI support community, but encouraging graduate students to consider this as a profession; 3) to provide training and resources for researchers so they can better understand the BI criterion and how to effectively address it. Our end goal is to move from a NSF-funded network to a self-sustaining professional organization.

NABI has also established an international presence. NABI steering committee members and principal investigators, Kemi Jona (Northwestern University) and Susan Renoe (University of Missouri), as well as NABI advisory board member Tobin Smith (AAU), were invited to present at the Network for the Assessment and Evaluation of the Impact of Science (AESIS) conference in Amsterdam in summer 2015. In addition, Dr. Renoe was invited to become a member of the AESIS advisory board. NABI will continue to create partnerships with international research agencies and use these partnerships to bolster the database with international broader impacts resources.

The next Broader Impacts Summit will be hosted by the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia April 20-22, 2016. The theme for the Summit will be “Broadening Participation.” We invite you to join us. For more information, to join NABI, or to register for the 2016 Summit, visit our website at www.broaderimpacts.net. You can also follow us on Twitter @NA4BI.

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Footnotes:
1 http://broaderimpacts.net/
3 www.broaderimpacts.missouri.edu
4 http://broaderimpactssummit.missouri.edu/
6 http://broaderimpacts.net/broader-impacts-summit-2015/

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