

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a year-long study of the programmatic priorities of the National Science Foundation's Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (NSF/SBE). The central activity was a Web-based, open call for 2,000-word white papers in which authors would describe decadal scale research needs and opportunities in at least one of three areas: driving questions; the human capacity to pursue those questions; and the infrastructure to enable those activities to proceed. A total of 252 manuscripts were successfully uploaded to the system, and all but a handful of papers, held back at the authors' request, have been posted to the public website ([http://www.nsf.gov/sbe/sbe\\_2020/](http://www.nsf.gov/sbe/sbe_2020/)). Analysis of the papers was supplemented by site visits and discussions with colleagues. From these activities, the report concludes the following:

- Interest in the social, behavioral and economic (SBE) sciences is broad, deep, and varied, reflected both in the characteristics of the researchers and in the range of the science that they pursue and believe will be possible.
  - Future research will be interdisciplinary, data-intensive, and collaborative. That vision rests on thorough grounding in the core SBE sciences that continue to present important, discipline-based research and methodological challenges.
  - The research community looks to NSF/SBE to provide leadership and direction in building capacity and infrastructure, most notably in interdisciplinary training (capacity-building) and infrastructure (data and facilities to support analysis, simulation, tools, and training in new research methods, including integration and synthesis across data, methods, and disciplines).
  - Four major topic areas have been identified within the wealth of ideas received: population change; sources of disparities; communication, language, and linguistics; and technology, new media, and social networks.
  - NSF/SBE's existing programs serve their communities well. New topics, especially multidisciplinary ones, may invite a more flexible structure within the directorate.
- NSF/SBE will continue to explore new ideas in the future, concentrating over the next five years on more focused planning activities that will (1) strengthen the ability of the directorate to support interdisciplinary research, develop human capacities, and build out the data and organizational infrastructure; and (2) consider approaches required to shift resources to relevant priorities. The highest priorities go toward planning and implementation:
- Devote attention to evaluating and implementing ideas and recommendations in the white papers that concern existing programs.
  - Enhance interdisciplinary research with initial preference given to four areas: population change; disparities; communication, language, and linguistics; technology, new media, and social networking.
  - Develop planning activities to test ideas for new data and infrastructure services.