

*The National Academies of*  
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Standing Committee on  
Advancing Science Communication Research and Practice



## Building Capacity for Science Communication

### **Partnership Awards**

Request for Applications

#### **Purpose and Overview**

With support from the Rita Allen Foundation (“Sponsor”), the National Academy of Sciences’ (“NAS”) Standing Committee on Advancing Science Communication Research and Practice (“Standing Committee”) is offering awards to support the formation and development of collaborative researcher–practitioner partnerships. These awards are intended to facilitate collaborative efforts that will advance the science of science communication through the development, use, and evaluation of evidenced-based approaches to the practice of communicating with people about science.

Support may be given to projects at various stages of project planning or execution:

***Catalyst awards*** of up to \$12,000 shall be used to facilitate the development of new collaborative partnerships or projects. Their purpose is to allow prospective partners to meet in person, to establish a productive collaboration, and to develop a preliminary project plan, which may then be used to secure external funding.

***Partnership support*** awards of up to \$50,000 shall be used to support the design, execution, and the evaluation of the first stages of a collaborative project.

To apply for these awards, partners will submit a joint proposal that describes the rationale for their partnership, the focus of the collaborative work (i.e., the science communication problem and the science topical focus of the collaboration) that will be addressed through the partnership, a workplan for conducting the project collaboratively at all phases, an evaluation plan and an outline of how the work will improve the way in which science is communicated or used in applied settings. Proposals that have a focus on

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underserved populations will receive priority consideration. Additional details about the requirements for proposals appear below.

Members of the Standing Committee will select the teams to receive awards, with an announcement in early August 2019. Awarded teams will receive funds to begin implementing their plans for collaboration.

**Background**

Fostering and strengthening connections between research and practice is central to the mission and goals of the Standing Committee, as shown in the box below.

**Mission of the Standing Committee**

The Standing Committee aims to advance science communication **research, practice, and use** by:

1. fostering and strengthening connections

- between existing networks and initiatives related to science communication
- between research and practice in science communication
- between diverse disciplines
- between science and diverse and new publics, and

2. strengthening the capacity and support for effective science communication, including encouraging research consistent with *Communicating Science Effectively: A Research Agenda*.

The Standing Committee ultimately seeks to help connect more people with science and to help ensure that all people have access to and can use information from science.

**Goals of the Standing Committee:**

1. Encourage building a more coherent knowledge base through systematic development and testing of different approaches to communicating science
2. Make it easier for science communication practitioners to access, interpret and use research across disciplines to inform their practice.
3. to support individuals and organizations in the communication of science outside the scientific enterprise.

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The Standing Committee seeks to advance the field of science communication and the use of evidence in practice in ways that are consistent with the 2017 NAS report, *Communicating Science Effectively: A Research Agenda*. This report identified cross-cutting themes for researchers and communicators of science to consider in their work, as well as major challenges that should be addressed to advance the field and fill critical gaps in knowledge about effective practices. In addition to calling for partnerships between researchers and practitioners to address challenges in science communication, the report also called for:

- Aligning communication approaches with goals
- Moving beyond the “deficit model” of communication
- Building and testing explanatory models of individual influences on science communication and their interactions in a system
- Increased evaluation of science communication practice, especially in real-world settings

More detailed discussions of these points may be found in the report and additional materials at <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/23674>.

Proposals should be consistent with both the mission of the Standing Committee and the important themes of *Communicating Science Effectively*.

**Required Elements for Submissions**

The proposal should describe a collaborative partnership between one or more researcher(s) who study processes related to science communication and use and one or more practitioner(s) who communicate or facilitate the use of science. Examples of such partnerships include:

- public health communicators focused on preventing the spread of influenza and researchers focused on the ways that values and ideas are communicated through informal social networks; a partnership could also include experts in the subject matter (e.g., an epidemiologist or a microbiologist).

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- a group communicating science for public or community decision-making (e.g., environmental impacts) and researchers who study effective tools for public engagement or deliberation
- informal science educators working with researchers who examine ways of broadening the reach of science communication to hard-to-reach audiences
- actors communicating or developing interventions to increase research use by policy makers and practitioners, and the researchers studying their efforts

The partnerships must be fully collaborative and go beyond the types of relationships where researchers conduct evaluations and report results back to practitioners or practitioners are engaged only in a limited aspect of the research, such as collecting data.

The relationships among the partners named in the proposal may currently exist or be in the process of being formed, but should not be hypothetical (i.e., they should not just describe a role but a person ready and able to fill it). As such, letters of cooperation from the proposed partnering organizations should be included as appendices to the proposals.

Applicants also need to submit a budget and brief justification along with their proposal describing how the award will be used and administered. This budget should include any applicant's applicable institutional indirect costs.

1. *Catalytic Award* proposals should not exceed 1,000 words. They should present a basic vision of what the aspirations of a partnership would be, identify the partners who would be involved, and describe how the funds will be used to facilitate the partnership.

The short proposal for catalytic awards should include:

1. The partners' names, affiliations (if any), expertise, and relevant experience;
2. The rationale for the partnership – what will this partnership uniquely contribute to advancing understanding or solving a problem?
3. The science communication or use problem and topical focus of the proposed collaboration
4. Connections to *Communicating Science Effectively* and/or other related National Academies' reports (see below);

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5. A plan and timeline for establishing the collaboration, including strategies for addressing anticipated challenges.
  6. Anticipated next steps following the catalytic activity.
2. *Partnership Support* proposals should not exceed 3,000 words. They should succinctly describe the goals and expected outcomes, how they will be accomplished, how they will be evaluated, and how the partnership can advance the understanding and practice of the science of science communication.

*Partnership Support* award proposals should be designed so that the planned project will be collaborative in all phases, including in its design, execution, and evaluation. The proposal should describe plans for this collaboration and how the partners will advance their work together using the funds provided during the grant period. The collaborative work proposed in response to this RFA must be completed by the end of the grant period (August 2019 - December 1, 2020). However, the work proposed may be a component of a larger effort. For example, funds may be used by partners to initiate project activities and gather and analyze pilot data as a “proof of concept.” Partnership support awards may also be used in combination with other sources of funding for the collaborative project. In these cases, the proposal must specify how the proposed support will extend or complement existing funding.

The short proposal should present a coherent and concrete plan that includes:

1. The partners’ names, affiliations (if any), expertise, and relevant experience;
2. The rationale and goals for the partnership. Explain what this partnership will uniquely contribute to advancing understanding or solving a problem and why you have chosen the particular partners.
3. The science communication or use problem and topical focus of the collaboration
4. Connections to *Communicating Science Effectively* and/or other related NAS reports (see below);
5. The proposed approach to establishing and sustaining the partnership, including strategies for addressing anticipated challenges;
6. The partners’ roles in the project;
7. Project milestones and timeline
8. Any progress to date;

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9. Expected outcomes and strategies to achieve those outcomes.

Proposals that have a focus on underserved populations will receive priority consideration.

**Submission Instructions**

Teams should submit their proposal as a single PDF file by 5:00 p.m. EDT on July 1, 2019, to [partnershipawards@nas.edu](mailto:partnershipawards@nas.edu). **Late submissions will not be accepted.** The proposal should include contact information and CVs for each of the proposed partners. Awards will be made in early August 2019.

**For Assistance**

For any additional questions, please contact: [partnershipawards@nas.edu](mailto:partnershipawards@nas.edu).

**National Academies' Reports and Resources:**

[Communicating Science Effectively: A Research Agenda](#) (2017)

[How People Learn II: Learners, Contexts, and Cultures](#) (2018)

[Human Genome Editing: Science, Ethics, and Governance](#) (2017)

[Science Literacy: Concepts, Contexts, and Consequences](#) (2016)

[Effective Chemistry Communication in Informal Environments](#) (2016)

[Gene Drives on the Horizon: Advancing Science, Navigating Uncertainty, and Aligning Research with Public Values](#) (2016)

[Environmental Decisions in the Face of Uncertainty](#) (2013)

[Learning Science in Informal Environments: People, Places, and Pursuits](#) (2009)

[Public Participation in Environmental Assessment and Decision-making](#) (2008)