

ASCR Response to the Report of the ASCR Committee of Visitors Review of the Next Generation Networks for Science

Date of COV: October 11, 2011

Date of Response: March 28, 2012

Program Point of Contact: Richard Carlson

COV Recommendation	Program Response
<p data-bbox="201 313 1020 375">The COV found that the solicitation development process to be effective and fairly well-administrated:</p> <ol data-bbox="201 418 1020 1255" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="201 418 1020 524">1. NGSN is encouraged to seek active means to broaden participation in all phases from workshop and solicitation development to solicitation announcement.<li data-bbox="201 857 1020 963">2. NSGS should maintain consistency in handling the review criteria across solicitations, clarify role of LOIs and enforce LOI policy.<li data-bbox="201 1117 1020 1255">3. NSGS solicitations should be more explicit in the expectation of “deployment” on ESnet and other DOE networking infrastructure to ensure fair and appropriate reviews of the proposals.	<ol data-bbox="1062 418 1881 1369" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="1062 418 1881 816">1. Workshops sponsored by NGNS to indentify DOE future program requirements are typically organized and chaired by experts from the community. An organizing committee is generally charged with the responsibility to identify and invite highly qualified workshop attendees familiar with DOE’s science mission. NGNS program announcements and peer-reviews are conducted in accordance with federal policies and Office of Science grants and contracts guidelines. NGNS announcements are posted in federally designated websites (<i>grants.gov</i>, <i>SC grants and contracts</i>, and <i>ASCR Websites</i>) for broad distribution.<li data-bbox="1062 857 1881 1076">2. Letters of Intent (LOIs), when required in NGNS announcements, are enforced. The case identified by the COV involved missing documentation resulting from lack of a good program management IT infrastructure. This issue will be resolved with the new Office of Science Portfolio Analysis and Management System (PAMS).<li data-bbox="1062 1117 1881 1369">3. NGNS announcements solicit R&D projects that support DOE’s science mission. The relevance and applicability of proposed research activities to this science mission is cited as a review criteria to assist potential researchers developing proposals. Text regarding deployment of applied research results will be added as required by the specific solicitation notice.

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<p>The COV found that the review process was conducted in accordance with the DOE normal standards of peer review:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No central repository for reviewers 2. NGNS is encouraged to harness current systems and systems under development to develop such a repository to aid Program managers in forming high-quality, diversified reviews panels for each solicitation 3. No panel summary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be useful to ask panels to collectively develop a short summary document reflecting the discussion of each proposal. • Include panel summary with material sent to PIs. 4. No review analysis for highly ranked, yet declined proposals. Such a review would be useful in assessing overall funding decisions and helpful to PIs in future submissions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Federal policies on the confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) make it difficult for NGNS to collect and store information of reviewers in a single centralized repository. 2. NGNS concurs with the COV on this recommendation and plans to transition to the new Portfolio Analysis and Management System (PAMS) under development in the near future. 3. A peer-review panel summary is not allowed under the current Office of Science peer-review guidelines. 4. ASCR now requires a detailed analysis of highly ranked proposals that are eventually declined. The policy was not in place for a subset of the proposals examined by the COV. ASCR and SC policies on these types of analyses are still evolving.

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<p data-bbox="201 313 1020 415">The COV was pleased to learn of NGNS participation in the Early Career PI Program, but was disappointed that no proposals were funded under this program</p> <ol data-bbox="201 456 1020 927" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="201 456 1020 558">1. NGNS must find ways to reach out and clearly convey the objectives and priorities of the NGNS Program to young investigators.<li data-bbox="201 639 1020 704">2. NGNS is encouraged to periodically revisit the balance between long term and short term research.<li data-bbox="201 859 1020 927">3. Longer term research may also provide an opportunity to engage and attract young investigators.	<ol data-bbox="1062 456 1881 1024" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="1062 456 1881 597">1. NGNS R&D activities are open to all researchers, including those in the early stages of their career in academia, national laboratories, and industry through the same competitive peer-review process.<li data-bbox="1062 639 1881 818">2. NGNS continuously evaluates it's program needs and the needs of the DOE Office of Science. Adjustments are made to maintain a balanced portfolio of fundamental research (long term), applied research (medium term), and advanced deployment (short term) activities.<li data-bbox="1062 859 1881 1024">3. NGNS concurs with the COV's emphasis on the importance of attracting talented researchers still in the early stages of their career. It hopes to do so by making an effort to use them as reviewers and extending to them invitations to its conferences and workshops.

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<p>NGNS uses effective mechanisms to monitor awards – progress reports, site visits, and PI teleconferencing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prior to award, PIs must be asked to address reviewers’ concerns to the satisfaction of the program managers. 2. NGNS is encouraged to formalize and document the negotiation of awards, particularly in cases of budget reductions<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cuts in budget must be reflected in reduced work and deliverables. 3. NGNS is encouraged to make all annual progress reports available online for analysis and review	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. NGNS program managers use reviewer comments, along with the project deliverables, to make funding decisions. Reviewer concerns are addressed during the final negotiation process between the NGNS PM and the PI. NGNS PM’s will use SC practices to capture and save the results of this negotiation process. 2. NGNS concurs with the COV on the need to document negotiated changes in a fundable proposal that result in budget adjustments and in the project scope. These negotiations were generally handled via email and it is hoped that the new program management system will resolve these issues. 3. DOE currently publishes the final reports of funded projects online in the <i>science.gov</i> website a closeout requirement an award. The decision to publish annual progress will be brought to the attention of DOE grants and contracts office for comments and guidance.

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<p>NGNS has engaged top-level scientists and network infrastructure developers in first-class research and innovations</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NGNS office should establish clear strategic goals regarding future funding allocations between long-term fundamental research, near-term research and development, and testbed support. 2. NGNS must find effective ways to nurture and engage the next generation of leading network researchers in research and development within the context of DOE’s mission, goals and priorities. 3. NGNS is encouraged to continue to develop synergistic and collaborative activities with other federal funding agencies, critical to leveraging resources across all agencies, such as GENI, MRIs, CRIs, NeTS, NetSE, DoD Network Infrastructure, ... 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ASCR does not have a policy that explicitly differentiates between short and long term R&D projects. ASCR’s solicitations are structured to focus on high-priority challenges articulated in its strategic plans and future directions. 2. NGNS collaborates and co-sponsors workshops, conferences, and seminars with leading professional organizations such as IEEE Communication Society, ACM Parallel and distributed Systems, the Global Grid Forum, the optical internetworking forum, and related national and international conferences. These activities provide excellent opportunities for talented researchers in the field to learn about DOE networking priorities and goals. 3. NGNS was pleased to be commended on its inter-agency collaboration and coordination activities, especially in organizing and sponsoring joint conferences and workshops, sharing experimental/testbed facilities, and coordinating PIs meeting, and related panel review activities. .