

Request for Approval under the “Generic Clearance for the Collection of Routine Customer Feedback” (OMB Control Number: 3145-0215)

TITLE OF INFORMATION COLLECTION: Focus group for National Science Foundation (NSF) Centers for Chemical Innovation (CCI) Program Grantees

PURPOSE: The National Science Foundation intends to leverage the October 11, 2018 Centers for Chemical Innovation (CCI) Program Phase II Principal Investigator (PI) Meeting to collect information through facilitated focus groups with twelve project staff from six active Phase II projects participating in the meeting.

The core mission of the Division of Chemistry in the Directorate of Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS) at the National Science Foundation (NSF) is to support innovative research, integrated with education, in the chemical sciences. In fiscal year 2004, the Division of Chemistry introduced the Centers for Chemical Innovation (CCI) Program (initially called Chemical Bonding Centers) to support research centers focused on major, long-term, fundamental chemical research challenges. The goals that NSF set forth for the CCI Program include that Centers will (a) produce transformative research, leading to innovation, and attract broad scientific and public interest; (b) be agile structures that can respond rapidly to emerging opportunities through enhanced collaborations; and (c) integrate research, innovation, education, broaden participation, and informal science communication. The Division of Chemistry has initiated a comprehensive assessment with Abt Associates to evaluate the extent to which and in what ways the CCI program is achieving its goals.

The purpose of the facilitated focus groups is to gain information from project staff that will inform adjustments and improvements in program design, respective vehicles that convey funding opportunities, (e.g., program solicitations, Dear Colleague Letters, etc.), and strategy for outreach to and community-building activities for relevant research communities.

For Center Directors: The goal of the focus group is to help NSF better understand how the CCI community selects important chemistry challenges, what is the best way to identify and approach these types of challenges in the future, and centers’ efforts and needs related to monitoring and/or evaluation. *For Managing Directors:* The goal of the focus group is to help NSF better understand how the CCI community selects broader impact activities, which center activities are best addressed through a coordinated effort such as CCI, and centers’ efforts and needs related to monitoring and/or evaluation.

By gathering information through facilitated focus groups, the information collection may serve to simultaneously catalyze opportunities for networking, collaboration, and early coordination of future research, broader impact activities, and other center-activities, such as monitoring and/or evaluation, among the participants.

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS: Respondents are twelve Center Directors (award Principal Investigators) and Managing Directors representing six active Phase II Center projects that are participating in the October 11, 2018 PI Meeting in Alexandria, VA. All twelve Center and Managing Directors staff will be invited to participate in a facilitated focus group. The information collection will occur during a facilitated 90-minute session, following a short presentation about the ongoing Evaluation of the CCI Program.

TYPE OF COLLECTION: (Check one)

- Customer Comment Card/Complaint Form
- Usability Testing (e.g., Website or Software)
- Focus Group

- Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Small Discussion Group
- Other: Questionnaire

CERTIFICATION:

I certify the following to be true:

1. The collection is voluntary.
2. The collection is low-burden for respondents and low-cost for the Federal Government.
3. The collection is non-controversial and does not raise issues of concern to other federal agencies.
4. The results are not intended to be disseminated to the public.
5. Information gathered will not be used for the purpose of substantially informing influential policy decisions.
6. The collection is targeted to the solicitation of opinions from respondents who have experience with the program or may have experience with the program in the future.

Name: Suzanne H. Plimpton, NSF Reports Clearance Officer

To assist review, please provide answers to the following question:

Personally Identifiable Information:

1. Is personally identifiable information (PII) collected? Yes No
2. If Yes, will any information that is collected be included in records that are subject to the Privacy Act of 1974? Yes No
3. If Yes, has an up-to-date System of Records Notice (SORN) been published? Yes No

Gifts or Payments:

Is an incentive (e.g., money or reimbursement of expenses, token of appreciation) provided to participants? Yes No

BURDEN HOURS

Category of Respondent	No. of Respondents	Participation Time	Burden
Individuals (focus group)	12	30 minutes each	6 hours
Totals	12	30 minutes each	6 hours

FEDERAL COST: This will be incorporated into the plans of running the program.

If you are conducting a focus group, survey, or plan to employ statistical methods, please provide answers to the following questions:

The selection of your targeted respondents

1. Do you have a customer list or something similar that defines the universe of potential respondents and do you have a sampling plan for selecting from this universe?

Yes No

If the answer is yes, please provide a description of both below (or attach the sampling plan)? If the answer is no, please provide a description of how you plan to identify your potential group of respondents and how you will select them?

Respondents will be a convenience sample that emerges from self-selected, voluntary participation of individuals among the twelve Center and Managing Directors representing six active Phase II Center projects that are participating in the October 11, 2018 PI Meeting in Alexandria, VA.

Administration of the Instrument

1. How will you collect the information? (Check all that apply)
 - Web-based or other forms of Social Media
 - Telephone
 - In-person
 - Mail
 - Other, Explain
2. Will interviewers or facilitators be used? Yes No

Please make sure that all instruments, instructions, and scripts are submitted with the request.

Focus Group Protocols
NSF's Centers for Chemical Innovation (CCI) program
PI and Managing Director Convening
September 24, 2018

Consent statement

- My name is [FIRST AND LAST NAME] and I am a researcher at [NSF/NSF CONTRACTOR].
- *For Center Directors:* The goal of this focus group is to help NSF better understand how the CCI community selects important chemistry challenges, what is the best way to identify and approach these types of challenges in the future, and your center's efforts and needs related to monitoring and/or evaluation.
- *For Managing Directors:* The goal of this focus group is to help NSF better understand how the CCI community selects broader impact activities, which center activities are best addressed through a coordinated effort such as CCI, and your center's efforts and needs related to monitoring and/or evaluation.
- Our collection of information through the focus group have been reviewed and approved under OMB Control Number 3145-0215.
- We expect the focus group to take about 45 minutes.
- We will aggregate the information that you provide for NSF and you will not be quoted by name or in any other way that can identify you. However, since your group is small, there is some chance that NSF might be able to infer who you are based on your answers
- Please keep the conversation in the room confidential and not to share what you've said or heard to others who are not in this group
- Please feel free to ask for a clarification or to not answer any question
- Do you have questions for me before we proceed?

Questions for Center Directors

1. The goal of the CCI program is to "support research centers focused on major, long-term fundamental chemical research challenges." How did your center select your challenge?
2. What are the most important current or emerging fundamental challenges in chemistry?
3. Are these problems best approached through coordinated efforts such as the CCI program? What are other approaches that could be considered to support the research efforts to address these challenges?
4. What can NSF do to build the research community's capacity to respond to these types of challenges without significant new funding?
5. For future program planning, what are other ways, in addition to a competition solicitation, to engage the community in identifying important chemical challenges?
6. What does your center currently do to monitor performance toward proposed goals? [For those who appear to do evaluation] Do you see your approach as effective? How have you used the evaluation findings?

7. Do you think the centers such as CCI should include an internal evaluation component? If yes, what types of resources or activities could help the centers implement this type of performance monitoring?
Probe: For example, a website containing evaluation tools and program-related results

Questions for Managing Directors

1. How did your center select the activities to meet the “broader impact” goals of the grant?
2. Have you experienced challenges implementing these activities? What were they and were you able to resolve them?
3. What are the center activities which could be best accomplished through coordinated efforts of the CCI community?
4. What does your center currently do to monitor performance toward proposed goals? [For those who appear to do evaluation] Do you see your approach as effective? How have you used the evaluation findings?
5. Do you think the centers such as CCI should include an internal evaluation component? If yes, what types of resources or activities could help the centers implement this type of performance monitoring?
Probe: For example, a website containing evaluation tools and program-related results