

**NATIONAL SCIENCE BOARD STATEMENT
ON RECOMPETITION OF MAJOR FACILITIES**

This statement on the recompetition of major facilities updates and replaces the Board's earlier resolution **NSB-08-12** from February 7, 2008. "Major facilities" here refers to facilities that have expected lifetimes longer than 5 years and are sufficiently large to require review by the Director's Review Board and by the NSB. The Board affirms that merit-reviewed competition must remain the foundation for the NSF's grant/award making process, but is concerned that imposing a recompetition for the management of a major facility at every renewal, typically at five-year intervals, could be damaging to the best interests of U.S. science and technology. The Board suggests that the appropriate timing of the first recompetition should be carefully assessed by NSF in consultation with NSB when an award is first proposed. Thereafter, the question of whether to recompete or not should be assessed at the time of every potential renewal. Recompétitions would be launched when the NSF, in consultation with the NSB, judges that it is necessary to ensure the optimum scientific impact and the most effective use of taxpayer dollars.

The Board has been strongly influenced by the January 2012 *Report of the Subcommittee on Recompétition of Major Research Facilities* from the NSF's Business and Operations Advisory Committee (BOAC) subcommittee that was chaired by Dr. William Frazer. The Frazer report argues persuasively that undertaking recompétitions every 5 years may be too frequent, given the longer lifetimes characteristic of major facilities and the 2–3 year effort required to prepare for, and conduct, an effective recompétition. The investment of time, effort, and money required of the community to generate compelling proposals, and of the NSF to foster a meaningful and well informed competition, is considerable.

The Board believes that the NSF should routinely and rigorously assess the advantages and disadvantages of recompeting the management of major facilities and recommends that NSF develop procedures for making such assessments and for seeking NSB input. The Frazer Report offers several recommendations that would facilitate consultation with the Board in this regard. For example, it would be very useful to Board deliberations about specific cases if the NSF chose to "adopt a uniform, Foundation-wide, checklist of considerations that should go into a decision to recompete." The NSF and NSB should consider long term strategy options at the time of the initial solicitation for an award.