

Córdova reveals nine big ideas for the National Science Foundation

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France Córdova, Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF), recently released a research vision for NSF centered on nine ‘big ideas’ after a two-day offsite planning retreat for the agency’s leadership in April.

Córdova’s plan includes six research big ideas: (1) increasing data research and infrastructure and developing a data capable workforce, (2) understanding the intersection of technology in everyday life, (3) discovering the laws governing biological systems, (4) exploring the next frontier in quantum mechanics, (5) investigating environmental change and resource availability in the Arctic under climate change, and (6) ushering in an era of multi-messenger astrophysics to investigate unexplored cosmic phenomena.

The plan also included three processes, including convergent research, or bringing diverse experts together to address big challenges, mid-scale research, or lowering the threshold for Major Research and Equipment Facilities Construction expenditures, and NSF 2050, or the creation of a fund for bold, collaborative research projects requiring long-term financial commitments, similar to NIH’s common fund.

While the nine ideas seek to inspire greater congressional support for NSF, some are calling Córdova’s ideas a “catalyst for broader investment,” referring to potential collaborations with private sector actors interested in sharing data and technologies.

Sources: American Institute of Physics, National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, Science Magazine

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