

Geological Society of America

**White Paper
on the
National Leadership Initiative**

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Table of Contents

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|---|---|
| Introduction to the National Leadership Initiative | 1 |
| The Mission of the National Leadership Initiative | 2 |
| Activities and Services of the National Leadership Initiative | 4 |

Appendices

| | |
|--|---|
| Appendix 1 - Organization of the National Leadership Initiative | 6 |
| Appendix 2 - Performance Measures for the National Leadership Initiative | 8 |
| Appendix 3 - Estimated Budget for the National Leadership Initiative | 9 |

Introduction to the National Leadership Initiative

The Geological Society of America (GSA or the Society) is formulating a plan to create a National Leadership Initiative (NLI) that will further its core mission to be a leader in advancing the geosciences, enhancing the professional growth of its members, and promoting the geosciences in the service of humankind. The NLI will address the need for more effective communication among the Society, its members and their initiatives, and national, state and local policymakers and agencies. GSA's membership of more than 19,500 represents the broad geosciences community in the United States and world wide, and through the NLI, its voice will carry weight at all levels of policymaking.

Policymakers at the national, state and local levels are confronted with a wide array of challenging and complex issues that directly impact the geosciences community and for which geoscience knowledge is critical. Those issues include energy policy, water resources, environmental protection, natural hazards, mineral resources, climate change, science education, and others. Decisions made by policymakers, usually based on a wide variety of technical and non-technical factors, can benefit from expanded consideration of the current geoscientific knowledge and insights. Decisions to support or not support various scientific and regulatory programs in the National Science Foundation (NSF), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), to name a few, can have immediate and material consequences for GSA members and their organizations.

This document seeks to lay out an approach to enhance the communication of geoscientific information between GSA's members and policymakers and agencies. In collaboration with other geoscience organizations, the NLI will raise the overall level of geoscience community involvement in the public policy arena. Details of proposed NLI organizational structure and employee responsibilities, proposed NLI performance measures, as well as a draft NLI budget proposal are contained in the appendices to this document.

The Mission of the National Leadership Initiative

The mission of the National Leadership Initiative is to advocate for the GSA community, and to accomplish this, it must:

- Represent the GSA community to governmental entities and policy makers.

- Provide the GSA community with information and increased awareness of relevant issues through GSA committees, divisions, and the sections, and directly as necessary.
- Provide timely and relevant information and perspectives to policy makers on issues of relevance to the geosciences.
- Provide a structured, systematic approach for dealing with important geoscience issues.
- Promote and support national and international geoscience initiatives.
- Educate members on practical aspects of working with governmental bodies and agencies.
- Enhance collaboration with other professional scientific and engineering organizations, and coalitions and working groups relevant to GSA's mission.
- Foster collaborations with and among mission agencies and organizations, industry, and academia.

Because all of the nation's policymakers and government departments — as well as many national organizations of interest to the geoscience community — are based in Washington, D.C., the NLI will be most effective if located in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Proximity to policymakers significantly increases the opportunity to create and sustain important working relationships. Sustained relationships with an appropriate array of individuals associated with key congressional committees and federal agencies are critical to the effectiveness and success of the NLI. In turn, GSA accrues increased visibility and prestige from these sustained relationships and the increased effectiveness of the NLI. Increased visibility and prestige enhance the ability of the Society to grow its membership. With a Washington-area location, the NLI will substantially enhance the level of national geosciences leadership and representation in the public policy arena. Alternatively, the absence of proximity to federal policymakers and agencies would likely create a substantial impediment to the effectiveness of the NLI and thus reduce the benefits to the Society, its members, and the Nation.

The NLI will allow GSA to work more effectively with other scientific and engineering organizations already engaged in the policy arena in Washington, strengthening existing partnerships with the American Geological Institute (AGI), the American Geophysical Union (AGU), the American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG), Soil Science Society of America (SSSA), American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and the National Academies, among others. Recognizing the importance of state and local issues, the NLI will work with GSA's Geology and Public Policy Committee, Geology and Society Division, GSA Sections, and others, to help inform GSA members about critical issues and to

support activities by these groups at all levels of government. It is also recognized that the NLI should directly work with the National Governors Association, National Association of Counties, Association of American State Geologists, and other similar organizations to make that happen. And, the NLI will allow GSA to more effectively inform and work with its members and affiliated organizations to better prepare them for more active and productive interactions with governmental agencies and more effective engagement on issues of concern to them, consistent with GSA's vision and mission.

Through its Washington DC office, the NLI will also be an effective platform for encouraging state and local interactions. A Washington DC NLI office is essential for establishing effective communications with Congress, the White House, federal agencies, other government liaison offices, and nationally-based advocacy groups. But it is also essential to continue extend those communications to the state and local levels. Much of this state and local interaction will occur by the NLI working with the GSA's Geology and Public Policy Committee and Geology and Society Division, but will also include the NLI directly working with the National Governors Association, National Association of Counties, Association of American State Geologists, and other similar organizations.

The Activities and Services of the National Leadership Initiative

The activities and services of the National Leadership Initiative will enable the GSA and its members to actively engage in the decision-making process as it is occurring. The NLI will provide services both to GSA as an organization and to GSA constituents WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?. Serving the organization as a whole, NLI staff will represent GSA in working with the governmental affairs staff in other scientific organizations, particularly those in the Earth sciences, and will provide the vehicle through which GSA will engage on the policy process. In addition, NLI staff will assist individual Society members in their professional activities and initiatives in Washington. The services of the NLI complement the related activities of other scientific organizations that have a presence in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

Service to GSA Constituents

The NLI staff will provide specialized services to GSA constituents, including individual GSA members and GSA Divisions. Some of those services will include:

- Arranging visits on Capitol Hill with Members of Congress and their staffs.
- Assisting in the preparation for Capitol Hill meetings, including assistance with briefing materials and helpful guidelines to effective communication of scientific material.
- Accompanying members on their visits to the Hill and to other federal entities, as desired.
- Assisting constituents in the preparation and presentation of congressional testimony.

The value of personal communication of scientific findings and concepts directly with Members of Congress or their staff cannot be overstated. Thorough and careful preparation for such communication opportunities can greatly increase the likelihood that they are effective. The NLI can be a significant resource for GSA constituents in enhancing the effectiveness of communication with policymakers.

Service to GSA

On behalf of the GSA as a whole, the NLI staff will be responsible for:

- Establishing and growing relationships with agencies that impact science, scientific research, science education, and science-related public policy, and tracking activities in those organizations.
- Establishing and growing relationships with the staff of relevant congressional committees and subcommittees.
- Preparing and submitting written and oral briefing materials that present GSA positions on relevant subjects to agencies, congressional committees, and to Executive Branch science offices.
- Helping to prepare and arrange for testimony at hearings and meetings.
- Establishing cooperative working relationships with other societies, and participating in coalitions and working groups relevant to GSA's mission, taking a leadership role as appropriate.

The NLI staff will serve as a liaison and communications center for the GSA community in order to provide timely oversight of important issues and emerging initiatives and will seek to ensure that the geosciences are an integral part of broader science initiatives in key funding agencies.

Appendix 1

Organization of the National Leadership Initiative

The NLI will operate under the direction of the GSA Council and Executive Committee through the Executive Director of GSA, with assistance in oversight and strategic planning by the Geology and Public Policy Committee (GPPC). In response to evolving mission, capabilities and responsibilities, the composition of the staff of the NLI may evolve over time. Presently, the proposal envisions growing to two professional positions and a modest level of administrative support.

Director of Government Affairs (DGA)

The DGA, who will report directly to the Executive Director, will be responsible for the operation of the NLI. The DGA's duties include:

- Staffing and operation of the NLI office.
- Establishing and maintaining relationships with agencies that impact science, science research, science education, and science-related public policy.
- Tracking issues and developments in key congressional committees and subcommittees, and at relevant agencies.
- Leading the effort to communicate GSA's views on geoscience policy issues to relevant agencies and congressional and Executive Branch entities, as appropriate.
- Helping to prepare and arrange for briefs and testimony for hearings and meetings, and, at the request of GSA President or the Executive Director, presenting testimony.
- Participating in coalitions and working groups relevant to GSA's mission and mandate, taking a leadership role as appropriate.
- Coordinating activities to complement work by other professional societies government affairs programs.
- Accompanying GSA members when they visit agencies or congressional offices
- Serving as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Geology and Public Policy Committee.

The ideal DGA will be an experienced professional who has: (1) substantial background with national Earth science policy; (2) significant knowledge regarding the operations and entities of Congress, federal agencies and non-governmental organizations in the Washington arena; (3) demonstrable self-initiative; and (4) the capability of managing a small office with very important contacts. Such an individual would immediately establish GSA's presence and begin to collaborate with other geoscience offices (e.g., AGI, AAPG, and AGU) and participate in

established geoscience initiatives, maximizing the opportunity for early effectiveness of the NLI.

Assistant Director of Government Affairs (ADGA)

The ADGA will participate in many of the activities outlined for the DGA, working under the supervision of the DGA. This position could be filled at a range of levels from a young Ph.D. with a demonstrated interest in science and public policy, such as a congressional Fellow, to individuals at the bachelor's or master's level with relevant policy experience.

Government Liaison (GL)

This position may not be required if a sufficiently experienced person can be recruited for the position of DGA. The Government Liaison (GL) position, an element associated with the initiation of the NLI, is envisioned to be filled through a contract with a professional, Washington-based firm with established congressional and agency contacts, and experience with geoscience issues. Although the NLI is not a lobbying effort, a professional lobbying firm can be an effective means of insuring quality contacts and developing effective strategies. A well-chosen lobbyist has an accumulated knowledge of people, committees and agencies in Washington, D.C., that is uncommon in individuals based elsewhere. If implemented, the use of the GL would steadily decrease as the expertise of the DGA increased, until the services of the GL were no longer required. Duties of this person will include:

- Arrange appointments for DGA, GSA leaders and members with congressional offices and agencies
- Work with the DGA to track developments in targeted congressional committees, subcommittees
- Accompany GSA leaders and members when they visit agencies or congressional offices; depends on the nature of these visits
- Work with DGA and/or GSA members to draft appropriate language for statements, briefs, or other documents being presented to congressional offices or agencies.

Administrative Staff

Administrative staff includes secretarial-clerical, to be provided (at least initially) through shared resources in office space rented from a partner organization.

Appendix 2

Performance Measures of the National Leadership Initiative

The performance measures of the NLI will change over time as the capabilities and responsibilities of the office evolve. The Executive Director, a subcommittee of the GPPC, and the DGA will establish the initial goals of the office and appropriate tracking metrics. The DGA will provide to the GPPC subcommittee an evaluation of performance of the NLI in the context of the established goals and metrics. The GPPC subcommittee will prepare and submit its own interim and annual progress reports to the Executive Director and the full GPPC. Those reports will evaluate the performance of the NLI in the context of the performance goals and metrics previously established, will include an assessment of the value of the NLI to the GSA and its members, and will include the DGA report as an appendix. Following review and comment from the GPPC and Executive Director, the progress reports will be provided to Council. After the first year, progress reports will be issued annually. After that time, the DGA or the Executive Director may suggest modifications to the performance metrics each year, as required.

The NLI cannot be directly responsible for the decisions that Congress or the Executive Branch make or fail to make. Instead, one job of the NLI is to ensure that the GSA and its constituents have an opportunity to communicate their scientific views with Congress, and that Congress has timely access to those views as needed. In evaluating the effectiveness of the NLI, it is important to distinguish between “activity” and “productivity.” Nonetheless, because many of the actual accomplishments of the NLI will become recognizable only over time, it likely will be necessary to focus on the activities of the NLI staff initially. Some metrics to track may include:

- Creating or seizing opportunities to submit materials to congressional committees and subcommittees
- Relationship-building with key staff of targeted Federal agencies
- Responsiveness to requests from GSA members to assist in scheduling meetings with members of Congress, agency staff, and when appropriate accompanying them during such meetings
- Participation, in particular, leadership roles in coalitions and working groups
- Communication back to the GSA leadership and community on Washington developments that impact them
- Workshops at GSA meetings and other opportunities to raise the comfort level of GSA members in being active citizen-scientists

Appendix 3

Estimated Budget for the National Leadership Initiative

Estimated costs for the NLI are summarized in the following table. The major consideration that drives material cost differences is the number and level of staffing and the potential GL contract. The three scenarios differ with regard to the knowledge and experience of the DGA. A more qualified person will command a higher salary, but may mitigate the need to use an outside firm to assist with the government liaison role, or perhaps the ADGA role. Basic operational costs include rental/ leasing office space, utilities, administrative and budgetary support, and travel. The office and administrative support contract reflects quotes received from two Washington, D.C. sources.

| <i>Item</i> | <i>Senior DGA Option</i> | <i>Junior DGA Option</i> | <i>2-Person Option</i> |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Personnel | | | |
| DGA Salary | \$150,000 | \$110,000 | \$135,000 |
| ADGA Salary | | \$75,000 | \$85,000 |
| Benefits | \$49,500 | \$61,050 | \$72,600 |
| GL Contract | | \$150,000 | \$150,000 |
| Office & Administrative Support Contract | \$36,000 | \$36,000 | \$36,000 |
| Operating Costs | \$16,000 | \$16,000 | \$16,000 |
| Travel | \$15,000 | \$15,000 | \$20,000 |
| TOTAL | \$266,500 | \$463,050 | \$514,600 |

Although there may be a number of ways that the NLI will be able to be reimbursed for or otherwise fund some of its activities, it is anticipated that the GSA will always have to provide substantial financial support. If self-sufficiency is a requirement, the Initiative is not viable. On an order of magnitude basis, the annual cost for a fully functional NLI is likely to be between \$500,000 and \$600,000 per year. Less robust or more slowly developing options will cost less. There are clearly other alternatives that lie between the three implementation scenarios considered here.