

Position statement on the value of participatory sciences in Federal programs

24 March 2025

In the Federal government's portfolio of science programs, participatory sciences have become a hidden but valuable innovation for efficiently addressing the research priorities of the American people. Also known as citizen science, crowdsourcing, community-based monitoring, volunteer research, and more, these collaborative research and monitoring efforts depend on knowledge, insights, and observations from members of the public. These projects build connections between people and the government programs that serve them—and deliver considerable value for society and science.

Over many decades, Federal agencies have provided leadership—working with partners in academia, state and local governments, community organizations, and the private sector—to develop the broad and rapidly evolving field of participatory sciences. This began by engaging the knowledge, interests, and lived experiences of individuals and communities. Today, advancements in technology, the internet, and geospatial mapping tools also allow scalable, data-driven citizen science initiatives that invite anyone with time, interest, and talent to take part in scientific research.

And, in a landmark move in 2016, Congress passed the [Federal Crowdsourcing and Citizen Science Act](#), which authorizes and encourages federal agencies to use crowdsourcing and citizen science to advance their missions.

The benefits of citizen science (and other participatory sciences) are evident. Investments by multiple agencies show that citizen science is an efficient and responsive strategy for research, monitoring, and discovery, providing a multiplier effect for traditional agency programs. Projects make research possible in places and at scales far beyond what agencies can do on their own. And, unlike any other research strategies, agency investments show that participatory sciences can *also* build public trust, answer questions, support engaged learning, advance economic opportunities, and foster collaborative relationships to address participants' priorities.

A broad set of high-impact participatory science projects now exist in many Federal programs, from biodiversity to disaster response, from monitoring environmental pollution to conducting human health studies, and from astronomy to agriculture. Experience shows that engaging scientists, government, and the public in collaborative problem solving offers a path forward on potentially contentious issues. These programs deliver unprecedented value for research, communities, and the public, and provide a strong foundation for linking scientists to the priorities of people in this country.

The leadership of Federal agencies is essential in the field of participatory sciences. Projects in this field power discoveries, innovations, and research findings never before possible. They amplify the voices and capacity of people from all perspectives and places throughout the United States to participate in, and ultimately to use, research for the benefit and betterment of themselves and their communities. With a robust participatory science program, Federal agencies help maintain the United States as a leader in all areas of the sciences.