

December 2024

Currently representing more than 360 institutions, CLASP (“Colleges of Liberal Arts Sponsored Programs”) has grown to become a mature Community of Practice (CoP) dedicated to empowering sponsored research professionals at predominantly undergraduate institutions (PUIs), particularly institutions that fit within the “liberal arts” college framework (PUI LACs).

In early 2023, a team of volunteers applied to the NSF GRANTED program on behalf of CLASP. The NSF funded the project, *Conference: CLASP: broadening participation and deepening its community of practice* (NSF #2324524), in support of the following objectives:

**Objective 1:** Strengthen CLASP’s Community of Practice (CoP) Traditions, which lead to the development of tools and scalable models advancing research at PUI/LACs

**Objective 2:** Broaden Participation within the CLASP Community, and

**Objective 3:** Reduce Systemic Barriers to Information by Improving Collaboration Between CLASP and External Funders, including NSF

With the assistance of the Science Education Resource Center (SERC) located at Carleton College, this funded project conducted a survey of CLASP membership in the spring of 2024, held virtual convenings in the summer of 2024, and supported the travel of many of CLASP’s members to the October 2024 annual conference at North Central College in Naperville, IL. Based on extensive feedback from our community members, the GRANTED convening team\* recommends the following tasks to the CLASP leadership (the List Advisory Group, or LAG).

### **Medium- to high-priority tasks that can be undertaken for free:**

#### **1. Develop a mission statement for CLASP [Obj. 1-3]**

- Clarifying CLASP’s mission will support other tasks, such as the development of a CLASP website. This core task will provide a framework and guidance as CLASP undertakes the other recommendations in this document. Further, it will enable the LAG to continue exploring the possibility of retaining the CLASP name while moving away from its use as an acronym.
- In addition to developing a mission statement, the LAG should explore the broader articulation of our shared community values: writing out brief descriptions of who we are, what we do, and how we do it, with the idea that these be shared on a future public website and with anyone who is new or looking to join us.
- We recommend the LAG also explore the articulation of a vision statement, reflecting where we want to be in 5 to 10 years.

#### **2. Clarify CLASP’s leadership structure within the context of a Community of Practice Model [Obj. 1 & 2]**

- We recommend setting up a leadership board, perhaps a “Board of Directors” or “Advisory Board”, to clarify what LAG members do. Reframing the LAG as a Board of Directors or Advisory Board will clarify what it means to serve as a LAG member,

ensuring that LAG members' service is appropriately understood and valued by their home institutions and the broader professional community.

- Along with changing the name of our leadership, the LAG should work to articulate a clear charge for the board and its chair, and establish regular elections by the full CLASP membership for positions on this board, including succession planning. Elements of the existing List Advisory Group might remain, such as staggered terms.
- We should consider how folks engaging in "mission" related work currently on the LAG (e.g., Collaboratory Keepers) would be represented on a future Board.

3. Develop a searchable member directory [Obj. 1 & 2]

- While this could conceivably come at a cost, one can imagine free versions that simply use spreadsheets, with (new) members completing a Google form or the like.
- One aspect of this directory that was specifically requested by many CLASP members was the ability to identify members' key characteristics and skills such as knowledge of EPSCoR, experience in subaward management or research compliance, to list a few examples.
- Also, it would be helpful to be able to identify who is working at what type of PUI (e.g., baccalaureate only; primarily baccalaureate with some Masters; womens colleges; MSIs) and what size of PUI (e.g., by student enrollment, number of faculty).

4. Form a LinkedIn group to connect CLASP members [Obj. 1-3]

- This would provide an opportunity to create an early-stage member directory, to increase CLASP's public presence, and to bolster advocacy for CLASP institutions.

5. Solicit volunteers to serve as content curators who would serve terms actively managing content on the current Collaboratory [Obj. 1 & 2]

- We encourage the LAG to first identify 5-10 areas of priority content, to guide the soliciting of volunteers.
- This will enable a greater number of CLASP members to get involved while also helping us to distribute work more equitably.

6. Develop and administer an annual survey of our membership to collect commonly requested data, such as IDC rates and information on office size and structure [Obj. 1-3]

- An organized, annual survey will help to keep data fresh, enable us to more closely monitor trends, and leverage data to advocate for CLASP institutions.

7. Collect anonymous salary information based on position titles for comparison purposes [Obj. 2 & 3]

- This will improve our ability to advocate for our work and advancement in our field.

8. Review and update the [Collaboratory agreements](#) and [rules of discourse](#), and disseminate to the community [Obj. 1 & 2]

- Ensure that the LAG understands its role in overseeing compliance with norms of behavior; perhaps deliver this content via a Coffee Talk session and/or training for new subscribers.

- Disseminate annual (or semi-annual) community standards emails that remind members of our collective values and the importance of maintaining our welcoming and inclusive community in our listserv exchanges, Coffee Chat conversations, and virtual/in-person conferences.

### **High-priority tasks for our membership, that come with associated fees:**

#### **9. Establish a web presence for CLASP [Obj. 1-3]**

- This critical need came up consistently in all conversations, across all three objectives. A dedicated website will advertise CLASP's existence and benefits to potential members and external partners (avoiding the need to rely on word-of-mouth) and will improve access to resources currently available through the CLASP Collaboratory.

#### **10. Implement a document sharing platform for job descriptions, policies, and the like, with appropriate security features [Obj. 1 & 2]**

- This need for an improved resource hub also came up consistently across many conversations with CLASP members. While the Collaboratory contains a wealth of information, it can be challenging to navigate and offers no security features.
- This hub/platform should also host our recorded webinars and trainings.

#### **11. Acquire a dedicated CLASP Zoom account [Obj. 1 & 2]**

- This will ensure that recordings are not tied to particular individuals or institutions, and will enable a broader range of volunteers to host and facilitate Coffee Talks, webinar events, and virtual conferences.

#### **12. Develop structured onboarding for new members including mentoring and training such as videos/webinars on appropriate topics [Obj. 1 & 2]**

- This will support our desire to be more inclusive, increasing access to CLASP resources. This will be a particularly useful support for those institutions with only one staff member charged with grant administration.
- This could begin with a regular Coffee Talk (perhaps 2x per year, eventually using a dedicated CLASP Zoom account) geared for new members that provides information on our history, mission, values, leadership; discusses the CoP model generally; and provides an overview of resources in the Collaboratory.

#### **13. Explore potential models for the collection of fees or dues in support of these recommendations [Obj. 1-3]**

- While not unanimous, CLASP members were overall open to this exploration in their responses to the survey as well as through conversations had at both our virtual and in-person convenings.
- We encourage the LAG to revisit the admonishments and advice of the Wenger-Trayners and consult with additional experts in association management to discuss the pros, cons, and potential unintentional consequences of this potential change (including 501(c)(3) status, a fiscal sponsor, or less formal models).

- An opt-in model or one that features different levels of dues/fees depending on institutional size/resources may help us to remain equitable while also providing the critical resources needed to better support CLASP institutions.

\*These recommendations are presented to the LAG by the CLASP GRANTED convening team:

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