

PANEL : DATABASE RESEARCH STRATEGIES OF FUNDING AGENCIES

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1. Introduction

Most VLDB attendees have at some time obtained funding from a government agency supporting research and development. The strategic directions of these funding agencies are important for the community to understand to optimise the intersection of research plans with funding availability. The ways in which the research community can influence funding agency strategy, and the way in which the funding agencies evaluate research proposals, and evaluate completed research projects, need to be understood

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The relationship between basic (curiosity-led) research, strategic (could lead to exploitable products in 5 years) research and near-market

leading to exploitable products in 2 years) research should be investigated, as seen by each of the funding agencies.

Their policies for separate national research and development, or cooperative international research and development should be examined, justified and discussed.

The role of public sector (government) support from both civil and military sources - nationally and internationally - is of interest, as is policy towards developing countries.

The comparative contribution to the types of research and development by industrial and commercial enterprises should be noted, not only in itself but particularly when in partnership with government funding in joint industry-academic projects

2. The Panel

The proposal is for a panel consisting of experts who can discuss the strategies of key funding agencies such as NSF (USA), Mombusho/MITI (Far East), European Commission (Europe) as a first set - possibly with more panellists from other or more detailed geographic regions. The differences in their strategies should be highlighted, explained and justified. The community as a whole, and perhaps the funding agency panellists, should learn much from such an exercise.

3. Issues:

In an attempt to focus the discussion, the following issues could be used to structure panellist presentations and the subsequent discussion:

- (1) who decides the strategy?
- (2) how do they do it - do they take advice and from whom?

- (3) does industry / commerce participate in the strategy? If so, in what way?
- (4) what are the proposal evaluation criteria? Do they evolve with needs for research and development?
- (5) what are the project (completed) evaluation criteria? Is peer review more important than commercial success?
- (6) is there a need for technical audit of projects during their lifetime? Does this give better value -for-money to the taxpayer, or industry funding the project?

4. Conclusion

The conclusion to such a discussion should be of great interest to the community. The only way to know the conclusion is to attend the panel!