

The eXtreme Science and Engineering Discovery Environment 2015 XSEDE STAFF CLIMATE STUDY REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

In June 2013, the eXtreme Science and Engineering Discovery Environment (XSEDE) initially requested an annual organizational climate study to understand working conditions and staff satisfaction. This executive summary report includes the main themes in the 2013–2015 survey data and provides recommendations for improving organizational climate.

Key Findings

2015

- Staff rated existing communication and collaboration tools as independently useful, however many (68%) would like XSEDE to adopt fewer and more comprehensive systems. Some group differences were found.
- While all groups rated Equity highly, male respondents rated the index significantly higher than female respondents in 2015. Racial/ethnic differences were also found.
- Respondents rated Resources & Support items differently depending on their length of employment with XSEDE, Level 2 area, role, and race/ethnicity.
- Staff expressed concerns regarding decision making specifically surrounding software development, testing, and deployment.
- Weaknesses in human resources available via XSEDE are seen by staff as a consequence of its distributed nature.

2014-2015 Comparisons

- Wiki usability was scored significantly higher in 2015 than 2014 by respondents.
- Due to a lack of racial/ethnic diversity in survey respondents, less differences in ratings from underrepresented groups were seen in 2015 compared to 2014. Members of the Asian community, however, rated 71% (5/7) of dimensions significantly higher than other groups in 2015.

2013-2015 Comparisons

- All dimensions continue to increase from 2013 baseline scores and meet or exceed comparable project ratings. The highest gains were made in the Responsiveness dimension.
- The 2013-2014 trend of low FTE staff reporting low levels of value and workload balance was reversed in 2015. Respondents with ≤ 0.40 FTE report significantly higher index ratings of Value & Satisfaction as well as Communication & Decision Making than higher FTE staff.

- Unlike 2013 – 2014 trends, no differences between Level 1 – 2 directors and other groups in satisfaction or value were found in 2015.

Recommendations

- ❖ **Communication and Collaboration:** Continue to improve internal communication and collaboration by refining wiki search capabilities to facilitate rapid navigation through the site. Consolidate communication via various avenues (i.e. Sciforma, SharePoint, Wiki, etc.) into a single comprehensive tool for collaboration across the project. Tools for consideration include slack, trello, and zoho due to their adaptability, mobile friendliness, and integration of features such as chat, messaging, private groups, and document sharing.
- ❖ **Equity:** Consider conducting deeper investigations of organizational climate as it relates to equity and discrimination with staff from all groups. This could be done through focus groups with representatives from all groups in XSEDE to better understand any potential sources of discrimination. Couple these activities with training in cultural competence and sensitivity to prevent potential misunderstandings among staff. Also consider highlighting work outside typical High Performance Computing (HPC) job responsibilities to increase understanding and value of non-traditional HPC fields of study/work.
- ❖ **Decision Making:** Clarify software decisions made by the strategic management team (SMT), User Requirements Evaluation and Prioritization Working Group (UREP), and Service Provider (SP) Forum when relevant, such as necessary deviation from traditional processes. When appropriate, further reduce human expenditure and project timelines by exploring automated processes for work conducted by SD&I and Operations.
- ❖ **Human Resources:** Provide detailed FTE assignments and budgets to Level 3 managers to facilitate management processes and increase individual accountability. Consider conducting performance evaluations for staff that identify potential avenues for career development within the project. Increase motivation and morale by utilizing “innovation funds” as monetary awards for outstanding work or public recognition via newsletters, XSEDE annual conferences, and XSEDE quarterly meetings.