



# SOCIETY FOR EXPERIMENTAL BIOLOGY IN ITS SECOND CENTURY

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025



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# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

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The Strategic Plan 2020-25 for the Society defines our direction for the next five years, encompassing our aspirations and priorities. It has been developed to ensure that we have a clear map to build the prominence of the Society by fulfilling its charitable objective of promoting the art and science of experimental biology, while enhancing its value for our members.

As an organisation, we have maintained a high profile in experimental biology for almost one hundred years. More recently, Covid-19 has brought unexpected challenges to our research and academic lives requiring adjustment and change. As our countries, economies, and communities come to grips with this greater uncertainty, it is imperative that we have a clear strategic direction. The coming years will bring demanding issues for our members. Through the implementation of this plan we can be clear in our direction, support, and motivation.

The Society must take a lead in demonstrating the impact and relevance of experimental biology, showing how our discipline can help manage challenges through this era. We will ensure our members are at the forefront of this, by empowering them to contribute to the public understanding of science. The real strength of our Society is its members, and the key to our success is to support and galvanise them in engaging with others about our science and our disciplines.

To achieve our strategic goals, we will be working to extend the reach and engagement of the Society. Alongside engaging more widely with the general public, industry, and decision makers, we will also place particular emphasis on attracting and supporting the next generation of biologists. An important component of this strategic support is to continually review our scientific meetings, establishing them as robust and relevant events. In addition, we will aim to provide a range of opportunities throughout the year for researchers to expand their network, raise their profile, and develop career building skills. The promotion of an implemented policy of equity, inclusion, and diversity in all our activities will also be fundamental in building a stronger framework for our science.

Another key plank to our strategy is to enhance the Society's journals, strengthening their links with the Society's activities and delivering greater benefits to our members and the community. We are operating in a multi-media age and aim to utilise all available platforms to best communicate with our members and the wider-community, helping to promote the science from the SEB journals and our members.

We can never assume that our relevance and profile is a given. We must be clear about our mission and remain dedicated to achieving our goals, which are clear and achievable. We are charged with building on our reputable past and ensuring that we work with our members, our wider community and the public to ensure a strong future for experimental biology.

Professor Craig E Franklin  
President  
July 2020



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## INTRODUCTION

Our Strategic Plan (2020 - 2025) provides a basis for the activities of the Society for Experimental Biology (SEB) over the next five years, including our centenary. It defines our vision for the Society, and our mission in achieving that vision.

## OUR VISION

“The continued evolution of an encompassing and cohesive organisation promoting experimental biologists, their research and disciplines to a wider world.”

## OUR MISSION

Develop an organisational culture in which we:

- Develop a cohesive framework which supports experimental biology, its disciplines, and the diversity of its membership
- Strengthen innovative and inter-disciplinary approaches to experimental biology
- Encourage communication and the sharing of ideas, innovations, and creative solutions to foster experimentation, collegiality, and networking
- Celebrate the successes of experimental biology to promote its benefits to the wider world



## KEY THEMES

The Society has eight key themes that form the framework for our strategic plan.

1. Extending the reach and engagement of the Society
2. Embedding inclusion and diversity
3. Elevating our scientific meetings
4. Attracting and developing the next generation
5. Enhancing the Society's journals and strengthening the links between journals and the Society
6. Reviewing the scientific structure of the society and sections
7. Reviewing and strengthening corporate governance
8. Celebrating the successes & future of experimental biology through the centenary of the Society.

## WHO ARE WE?

The Society for Experimental Biology was established in 1923 to represent the community of experimental biologists, and to support their science by providing opportunities to communicate their discoveries. The Society has made its overarching goal to foster connections and develop networks between its members, the wider scientific community, and society at large.

## HOW DO WE DO THIS?

We encourage the cross-fertilisation of ideas and disciplines - supporting new ideas, innovation, and bold leaps in thinking. We ensure that experimentation is at the heart of biology and we encourage diversity.

We bring people together - sharing learning and experiences, building contacts and relationships, creating links and networks between new and established scientists, and by supporting the next generation of biologists.

We promote the value and benefits of experimental research in the biological sciences - including the development of new methods and novel techniques.



We foster communication and dissemination of our findings to our community of experimental biologists, other scientists, and to the wider public.

## WHAT IS EXPERIMENTAL BIOLOGY?

**Experimental Biology** is the use of experimental methods to understand how living things function at every level of biological organisation, from the sub-cellular to complex ecosystems, through the rigorous development and testing of hypotheses.

**Experimental Biology** embraces the creative pursuit of new knowledge and understanding through rigorous scientific study of organisms and biological systems.

**Experimental Biology** encompasses and embraces biological research that yields new discoveries of relevance and importance to humanity.

**Experimental Biology** helps to find the answers and solutions we need to ensure our earth is protected and managed effectively.



# THE EIGHT KEY THEMES

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## THEME 1: EXTENDING THE REACH AND ENGAGEMENT OF THE SOCIETY

We will improve the Society's outreach and engagement with its members, potential members, other stakeholders, entities with a similar purpose, and the public. We will also aim to empower members to contribute to the public understanding of science.

### WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Launching our new engagement and outreach (E&O) portfolio, to include a new E&O award and sessions, giving members the opportunity to discuss key topics
- Improving how we demonstrate the public benefits and impact of experimental biology
- Improving public and other stakeholder engagement, and awareness of the Society
- Developing and implementing engagement plans with industry and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- Enhancing international engagement and developing relationships with emerging and developing economies
- Enhancing relationships with other scientific bodies, local and international
- Improving the SEB website to maximise information access for members, other scientists, and the public



## THEME 2: EMBEDDING INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

We will promote and value at all levels and in all activities, an implemented policy of inclusion and diversity, developing best practice and share this with members, their institutions, and other similar organisations.

### WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Creating an inclusive environment where differences are celebrated, and everyone is valued and respected
- Promoting equality of opportunity to all members and employees of the Society
- Ensuring the Society can monitor and review progress in the areas of equality and diversity in order to identify good practice
- Encouraging wider recognition of diversity within SEB membership and instigating proactive processes to deliver this
- Focusing on removing barriers to access to the Society (including conferences and meetings), and barriers to progression through a career path in science



### THEME 3: ELEVATE OUR SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS

We will review our scientific meetings and establish them as robust and relevant events. We will build an annual meeting, workshop and symposia programme that provides scientific information, education, and training with ample opportunities for networking and outreach.

#### WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Making the SEB scientific meetings the central place to discover and present the best, high-impact science, with a new forward-thinking approach
- Ensuring events are held in great venues with good transport links
- Ensuring the plenary lecture demonstrates the impact of the science, and is accessible to the general public
- Reviewing conference format and schedule to implement proposals for improvement
- Ensuring scientific meetings are catering to the needs of all our members, including students, volunteers, and non-academics
- Ensuring that scientific meetings are managed in the most effective, environmentally friendly, and cost-effective way, while remaining affordable for attendees and the Society
- Demonstrating the public benefit and impact of experimental biology by showcasing the science to scientists and the wider community, increasing public engagement
- Establishing networking events, such as social and educational gatherings and forums



## THEME 4: ATTRACTING AND DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION

We will provide support, networking, and benefits to the next generation of scientists, which will include - but not be limited to - early career scientists (ECS).

### WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Reviewing and updating the definition of an early career scientist, giving consideration to a range of new discounted membership fees to reflect the revised definition
- Identifying career barriers and main issues affecting ECS in their careers, using survey and focus groups, and investigating how the SEB can support the ECS cohort in overcoming those challenges
- Providing a range of opportunities to expand the ECS networks to raise their profile in their areas of expertise (including developing their confidence and experience in networking)
- Consulting on setting up a formal mentoring programme and/or inviting members to request an informal mentor via the website
- Providing ready access to career resources, to include multi-media support
- Expanding our portfolio of career training opportunities outside the Annual Conference, and introducing new training topics
- Investigating how we can deliver training to make it widely accessible
- Promoting experimental biology to schools and the public (to attract the next generation of biologists)
- Examining the potential for an ambassador programme



## THEME 5: ENHANCING SEB JOURNALS AND STRENGTHENING THE LINKS WITH THE SOCIETY

We will demonstrate the impact of experimental biology through publication of high-quality peer reviewed science in our journals and we will deliver greater benefits to our membership and community by improving the links between the Society's journals and the core business of the SEB, including meetings, outreach and engagement activities.

### WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Creating a long-term publications strategy, moving towards making all our journals open access and putting SEB at the forefront of open data
- Increasing the visibility of our journals and journal science across Society events, social media, the website and publicity material, to highlight their relevance and impact
- Promoting the science from SEB journals to the membership and the general public, with a view to linking journals to conference topics and sessions
- Promoting and publishing conference science in SEB journals
- Embedding the science in our publications in our education and outreach programmes
- Introducing journal workshops and training sessions such as scientific writing
- Reviewing business models to ensure the financial viability of our journals
- Reviewing the relevant publications markets to uncover opportunities for future journals



## THEME 6: REVIEW SCIENTIFIC STRUCTURE OF THE SOCIETY AND SECTIONS

We will ensure and implement an effective scientific structure of the Society and its sections that aligns with the interests and needs of its current and potential members across the world, supports inter-disciplinary science, and can assist in delivering its aims effectively across the breadth of experimental biology.

### WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Ensuring the Society reflects the broad scientific interests of members, and works towards inter-disciplinary activity, setting the framework with achievable initiatives such as ending the use of “Plant, Animal and Cell” labels for meeting sessions
- Identifying potential areas of membership growth not well served by other specialised societies
- Analysing whether the organisation of Sections can deliver effectively for our members across the remit of experimental biology
- Improving how the Sections can be more inclusive and reflect the interests of the 69% of members who are not UK based
- Reviewing the role of the bi-annual committee meetings in London, and highlighting the global nature of the society in marketing and branding
- Sharing and implementing best practice between Sections, to promote collaboration
- Ensuring the structure is forward-looking to ensure the Society remains innovative, responsive, and relevant, actively pushing scientific boundaries and supporting its members to deliver the best science possible



## THEME 7. REVIEW AND STRENGTHEN CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

We will review our corporate governance, considering the Society's long-term sustainability, while making certain that all trustees are aware of their obligations and fiduciary responsibilities.

We will be certain of efficient management of finances and contracts by ensuring that legal compliance obligations are adhered to and by applying best practice principles to all activities and ventures of the Society.

### WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY:

- Ensuring all legal corporate governance obligations are met and where practicable implementing best practice
- Reviewing the articles of association, and establishing robust record-keeping
- Managing the Society in an efficient way, ensuring value for money in the provision of all our support contracts and services, which will include improving financial systems
- Tendering for a new customer relationship management (CRM) system
- Reviewing income and investment policies
- Reviewing and streamlining processes, such as information technology and information management, to provide better support for staff, trustees and members
- Developing memorandum of understandings (MOUs) for partnerships with external organisations
- Exploring partnerships with external organisations and report progress on partnership working at each council meeting



## THEME 8: CELEBRATING OUR SUCCESSES AND THE FUTURE OF EXPERIMENTAL BIOLOGY

We will celebrate the successes and the future of experimental biology through the centenary of the Society in 2023.

### WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS BY

- Conceiving and developing a plan for 2023 activities and outreach
- Celebrating the prestigious scientists and science undertaken by members over the last 100 years
- Investigating the Society's history further, to support the centenary celebrations