

## **DSEF Research Priorities 2016-2017**

Research is a primary vehicle through which DSEF can build relevance and credibility to advance understanding of the direct selling channel. The Foundation's Research Priorities offers numerous opportunities for white papers and other research products, produced by DSEF Fellows.

### **1. Strategic Marketing Success Across Industries**

**Purpose:** Produce a direct selling company case study highlighting a business, sales or marketing success that is applicable across industries. Case studies or academic journal articles.

### **2. Direct Selling as an Engine of Opportunity in Underserved Communities**

**Purpose and Partners:** The report will document the positive impact of entrepreneurial opportunities created for Hispanics by direct selling companies. In producing and promoting the paper, the Foundation will seek a partnership with appropriate organizations such as the Latino Coalition, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce or the National Council of La Raza to produce and promote the paper. The Foundation will work with partner organization(s) to plan companion events to publicize study themes and results.

### **3. Economic Impact of Direct Selling Entrepreneurial Opportunities In Less Populated Markets With Limited Economic/Employment Options**

**Purpose:** The report will document the positive impact of entrepreneurial opportunities created in rural or economically disadvantaged areas by direct selling companies and the impact on local economies. Research data is provided by DSA's Socio-Economic Study (SEIS).

### **4. Survey of Satisfaction Rates Among Independent Contractors in Direct Selling Compared to Employees in Other Comparable Industries**

**Purpose:** Highlight earning, leadership and personal development opportunities available for those who choose direct selling as a path to entrepreneurship. Research data from DSA's "National Salesforce Study" is currently available.

## 5. Unique Benefit of Direct Selling Channel of Distribution as a Path to Market for Innovators/Products

**Purpose:** The study will document how direct selling companies and their independent salesforces drive product and training innovation. Direct selling companies have made a tremendous impact on industries that are commonly viewed as the biggest influencers behind economic growth and recovery in the U.S.—clean energy, business services, health and wellness education, telecommunications services, and Internet technologies. Direct sellers remain a driving force of the rebirth of U.S. innovation. Direct selling companies have rolled out unmatched products and services, transformed what it means to promote eco-friendly practices, and even incorporated top-of-the-line technologies to provide distributors and employees alike with invaluable business tools and education. Data from DSA’s 2015 Growth and Outlook Survey is available, with 2016 comparative data expected in Q1.

## 6. Ethics/Self-Regulation – Journal Article or Comparative Study

**Purpose:** Journal article will focus on the historical events/issues that led to the creation of the DSA Code of Ethics and its recent revisions, which were announced at the DSA Annual Meeting and will go into effect in January 2016. Target publication is the *Journal of Ethics and Entrepreneurship* <http://www.gardner-webb.edu/academics/journal-of-ethics-and-entrepreneurship/index>.

**Purpose:** Comparative study will highlight the critical role that responsible industries play in consumer protection. The report will compare and contrast DSA’s Code of Ethics, the role of the Code Administrator and our long-standing history of self-regulation vis-a-vis other industries. The report will include an examination of product claims as well as an analysis of training and compliance in the direct selling industry.

## 7. Business Challenges/Case Studies

**Purpose:** Produce multiple academic study products by partnering DSEF or DSA board member companies with an Academic Advisory Council member(s) or other academic or institution to engage professors and MBA or other graduate students to conduct research/data analysis or work on projects to address specific business challenges. These interactions will advance understanding of the direct selling business model, leverage the Foundation’s academic partnerships to address key industry challenges and provide valuable experiential learning opportunities and exposure to corporate opportunities for students and faculty.

**Timeframe:** Ongoing based on opportunity and interest.