

Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) Track-2 Awards ANNUAL and FINAL REPORT GUIDELINES 2024

A) Important changes for 2024

Please read through this entire document, as many changes for RII Track-2 annual and final report preparation have been implemented. This guidance has been developed to be consistent with the instructions provided in the General Programmatic Terms and Conditions (PTCs) for RII Track-2 awards.

As of January 1, 2024, annual and final reports for NSF EPSCoR RII Track-2 awards must conform to the following guidelines, which address the use of the EPSCoR Data Outcome Collection System (EDOCS). Any future updates to the Report Guidelines will be shared in a timely manner with the RII Track-2 PI community.

B) Annual and Final Report deadlines

Annual reports are due at NSF 90 days before the anniversary date of the award start date as specified in the NSF Award Document. Please keep in mind that reports take approximately four weeks on average to process and approve, and often take longer if NSF EPSCoR requires revisions. If the report is not approved by the anniversary award date, it will be classified as overdue. Overdue reports will delay pending NSF actions with which the Principal Investigator (PI) and co-PIs are associated as PIs or co-PIs.

If a No-Cost Extension is needed, PIs are encouraged to contact their managing PO to discuss this process and its impacts on the report deadline.

C) Preparing and submitting the report – general considerations

The following step-by-step instructions will help guide you in completing and submitting your annual report to EDOCS (OMB No. 3145-0243) and Research.gov. Feel free to contact the project's cognizant Program Officer for programmatic questions and edocs-help@nsf.gov for EDOCS technical questions. Visit the EDOCS Website (<https://edocs.epscor.nsf.gov>) to view FAQs, training videos, and other helpful documents and links.

If you encounter technical issues while working with Research.gov, please contact their Help Desk, 7 AM - 9 PM ET, Monday - Friday (except federal holidays) at rgov@nsf.gov or 1-800-381-1532.

Creative Business Solutions (CBS) manages the new EDOCS System and does not have the ability to monitor activity in Research.gov, so they are unable to provide support within that system. However, they are happy to assist EDOCS users as best as they can to ensure that users upload the appropriate documents and complete each section in Research.gov per NSF's instructions.

D) Beginning your work with the new EDOCS system

PIs should have received a Welcome Email from CBS containing instructions for logging into EDOCS and entering project participant information. If you have not received an EDOCS email from CBS, please contact edocs-help@nsf.gov to get your account set up.

To begin data entry, log on to EDOCS and enter the requested information for your EPSCoR project participants. Make sure to select the user role for each project participant. The system will send each of them an individual login email. This will enable them to complete their data entry. The PI is responsible for verifying the project data reported by the project participants in EDOCS. Once all data have been entered and the report narrative and supporting documentation have been uploaded into EDOCS, the PI may submit the report for review and approval by NSF EPSCoR POs by clicking the “Submit Report” button located at the bottom of the EDOCS home page. Only PIs can submit the report.

E) Preparing the Report Narrative – general considerations

The Report Narrative should be submitted as a single pdf-format file as an attachment within EDOCS. The primary purpose of the narrative report is to provide a clear, specific, and succinct summary of the progress achieved for the project’s research and other elements during the current reporting period. Only one narrative report should be submitted; separate jurisdictions or institutions within the same project may not submit separate narratives. The narrative report should describe the current status of the project with respect to its overall goals and objectives. This information will be used by the managing PO to evaluate all aspects of the project’s implementation and make a recommendation on continued funding, based on a comparison between what was planned to be done in the project year (as detailed in the proposal) with what was actually accomplished.

The Report Narrative must be a coherent and carefully edited description of the project’s accomplishments and challenges in the reporting year, rather than an amalgamated, “copy and paste” document. The use of jargon should be avoided as much as possible, and the language, in general, should be comprehensible to scientists and engineers from outside the specialized disciplines under study. All acronyms should be spelled out at first usage. If the report is not clear, concise, and comprehensive, it will be returned for revisions, delaying approval.

F) Required Sections of the Narrative Report

Heading: Identify the award number and title, awardee institution, PI, other participating institutions and jurisdictions, award start date, report submission date, and reporting period dates. For collaborative awards, also add the award number, awardee institution, and PI for each collaborator.

Overview: State the vision, mission, and goals of the project, and discuss how these fit within the context of the disciplinary field(s) at large and serve the participating jurisdictions’ interests. (1 page or less).

Executive Summary: Provide a summary (4 pages or less) of the key accomplishments achieved during the reporting period, addressing the NSF criteria of intellectual merit and broader impacts. Briefly describe any significant problems, novel opportunities, and/or changes in strategy during the reporting period. Note that further details will be provided in subsequent sections.

Research: Describe the major accomplishments and research findings during the current reporting period, organized by the major goals or focus areas of the project, as put forth in the original proposal. For each major goal, describe problems, unexpected results, and novel opportunities encountered and your response to them. Discuss the significance of these accomplishments and findings in the context of the disciplinary field(s) involved, how the results influence future directions for the current project and, when appropriate, how they suggest potential directions for future projects.

The narrative should be based on the specific research goals and objectives described in the proposal. For each objective, list major milestones and outcomes and it clearly state whether the project is ahead of, on, or behind schedule. In cases where the project is behind schedule, discuss the reason(s) for the delay and plans to get back on schedule. It can be useful to align this section with a strategic/implementation plan if your project has developed one in its early stages.

Emphasize especially significant, potentially transformative results. Identify the principal researchers and institutions responsible for each major accomplishment, as well as significant collaborations within and between institutions and jurisdictions. A reasonable number of figures may be included in this section to assist in reporting.

Education: Report on how research and education have been integrated throughout the project, including quantitative information on the involvement of students, postdocs, and early-career faculty in each research theme, as well as outreach and dissemination efforts to make the results more widely known.

Solicitation-Specific Project Elements: Address the **following areas in separate sections** that briefly outline relevant activities, accomplishments, and products. For each of these sections, address the progress made during the reporting period relative to the project goals for that period. Refer to EDOCS numerical data when appropriate.

- Interjurisdictional Collaborations
- Research Capacity
- Jurisdictional Impacts (for all involved jurisdictions)
- Workforce Development
- Overall Project Integration
- Broadening Participation

Development or Recruitment of Diverse Early Career Faculty: Provide evidence of recruitment strategies and professional development for junior faculty from RII Track-2-supported activities. Recruitment and retention strategies should pull from best practices for mentoring STEM professionals.

Evaluation: Progress in all aspects of the project must be evaluated annually. This evaluation should use the data from EDOCS as well as additional data that the evaluator may deem necessary to create a thorough evaluation of the project. The annual project report must include a summary of the formative and summative evaluation findings, and a description of the course corrections, if any, made by the project management team based on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation report(s).

Expenditures and Unobligated Funds: As required by the Programmatic Terms and Conditions, reports should include an update on project spending and specifically an estimate of the funds expected to remain unobligated at the end of the current support period. If that estimate is greater than 20% of the current year award amount, the PI also must provide a plan and timeline for expenditure of those funds.

If more than 20% of the current year award amount continues to remain unobligated by the yearly anniversary date of the award, approval to carry forward that amount must be granted by NSF EPSCoR. The awardee's Sponsored Projects Office should prepare the request, which must include a plan and timeline for expenditure of the funds, and submit the request via email to the managing NSF PO.

Special Conditions: Include in the report specific information relating to any outstanding actions taken or planned during the current reporting period in response to Jurisdiction-Specific Programmatic Terms and Conditions placed on the project at the time of the award.

G) Materials required to be uploaded into EDOCS

The following items are required to be uploaded into EDOCS as pdf attachments:

- The Report Narrative (described in section F)
- The External Evaluation Report
- The report of any external advisory body that convened during the reporting year.

The annual report will not be approved unless all required supporting documents have been uploaded into EDOCS.

H) Entry of “Prescribed Phrases” into Research.gov

Log on to Research.gov and complete the Annual Report for your EPSCoR project by entering a series of prescribed phrases into the appropriate text boxes. RII Track-2 awards do not use Research.gov for submission of Annual Report contents, but Research.gov is used to indicate that the report has been submitted. To submit the notification of a completed Annual Report to Research.gov, provide the following

information under each of the category tabs located at the top of the Report Content screen within the Project Report section of Research.gov.

1. **Cover tab:** Review and verify all the information about the project (Project title, PD/PI name, etc.) displayed in the **Cover** screen. If any corrections are required, contact the Research.gov Help Desk, 7 AM - 9 PM Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except federal holidays) at rgov@nsf.gov or 1-800-381-1532.
2. **Accomplishments tab:**
 - a) Under the **Accomplishments** tab, manually insert (do not cut-and-paste to avoid an error message) the following statement in the first box labeled **What are the major goals of the project?**: “In accordance with the instructions provided to EPSCoR Principal Investigators, the Annual Project Report has been submitted separately to the EPSCoR Program Office and includes the content specified by the NSF EPSCoR Data Outcome Collection System (EDOCS). The cognizant EPSCoR PO will review the contents of the report within EDOCS and subsequently transfer and approve the report in the appropriate NSF internal system.”
 - b) Next, there are four boxes under the question **What was accomplished under these goals (you must provide information for at least one of the 4 categories below)?** In the first box labeled **Major Activities**, manually insert (do not cut-and-paste to avoid an error message) the same statement identified above: “In accordance with the instructions provided to EPSCoR Principal Investigators, the Annual Project Report has been submitted separately to the EPSCoR Program Office and includes the content specified by the NSF EPSCoR Data Outcome Collection System (EDOCS). The cognizant EPSCoR PO will review the contents of the report within EDOCS and subsequently transfer and approve the report in the appropriate NSF internal system.”
 - c) Leave the remaining three boxes (**Specific Objectives**, **Significant results**, and **Key outcomes or Other achievements**) blank.
 - d) In the three boxes under the heading labeled **What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?**, mark the **Nothing to report** checkboxes on the right-hand side.
 - e) Be sure to select the **Save/Next Section** button at the top of the screen before moving on to the next tab.
3. **Products tab:** Under the **Products** tab, do not enter any information. Select the **Nothing to report** checkboxes for each of the five items beneath the question **What has the project produced?** Select the **Save/Next Section** button at the top of the screen before moving on to the next tab.
4. **Participants tab:**
 - a) Under the **Participants** tab, in the section labeled **What individuals have worked on the project?**, enter the names of the EPSCoR PI and Co-PIs.

- b) For the section labeled **What other organizations have been involved as partners?**, select the **Nothing to report** checkbox on the right-hand side of the screen.
 - c) For the section labeled **Have other collaborators or contacts been involved?**, select **No**.
 - d) Select the **Save/Next Section** button at the top of the screen before moving on to the next tab.
5. **Impact tab:** Mark the **Nothing to report** checkbox on the right-hand side for each of the eight questions. Select the **Save/Next Section** button at the top of the screen before moving on to the next tab.
 6. **Changes/Problems tab:** Mark the **Nothing to report** checkbox on the right-hand side for each of the six questions. Select the **Save/Next Section** button at the top of the screen before moving on to the next tab.
 7. **Special Requirements tab:** Mark the **Nothing to report** checkbox on the right-hand side. Select the **Save/Next Section** button at the top of the screen before moving on to the next tab.
 8. **Certify and submit:** Check the **Certification** checkbox and click the **Submit Report** button.

Note: In instances where “nothing to report” is entered in the report submission space in Research.gov, note that the relevant information (e.g., project accomplishments, contributions, publications, products) is included in the Annual or Final Report submitted in EDOCS.

I) **EPSCoR Program Officer Approval**

The EPSCoR PO will review your report for content, formatting, and clarity. Reports may be returned to you for additions, corrections, or suggested revisions. If no revisions are necessary, the POs will approve the submission in Research.gov. Once the report has been approved in Research.gov, annual funds will be released on the anniversary date of the award (for projects scheduled to receive a Continuing Grant Increment in the following year). Overdue reports (from this or any other NSF award) will cause a “block” to be placed on all funding, approval, and administrative actions for all NSF awards associated with both the PI and Co-PIs.