



Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (S-STEM) Program

Answers to
commonly asked
questions begin on
slide #32.

Webinar for PIs
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Today's Topics

- **Program Overview**
- **Eligibility**
 - Institution
 - PI
 - Scholarship Recipients
- **Proposal Sections**
- **Questions and Answers**

For full details, refer to the solicitation:

NSF-12-529

<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2012/nsf12529/nsf12529.htm>



PROGRAM OVERVIEW



Overview

The S-STEM program makes grants

to institutions of higher education

to support scholarships

for academically talented students
demonstrating financial need

to enable students to enter the STEM workforce or STEM graduate school following completion of an associate, baccalaureate, or graduate-level degree in science, technology, engineering or mathematics disciplines.



Origin

The program was established by the National Science Foundation (NSF) in accordance with the American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act of 1998 and modified in 2004, reflecting the national need to produce our own US high quality, scientific and technical workforce.

Congress created the program, and some aspects are specified in the legislation.



Program Goals

- **Improved educational opportunities for students;**
- **Increased retention of students to degree achievement;**
- **Improved student support programs at institutions of higher education; and**
- **Increased numbers of well-educated and skilled employees to fill local, regional and national needs in the scientific and technical workforce.**



Funding Sources

The program uses funds raised from H-1B visa fees, that are paid to the US government by business and industry to import skilled scientific and technical workers.

A portion of these fees are provided to the National Science Foundation to provide scholarships to talented students who have financial need.



Disciplines (Eligible Degrees)

- **Biological sciences (except medicine and other clinical fields)**
- **Physical sciences, including physics, chemistry, astronomy, and materials science**
- **Mathematical sciences**
- **Computer and information sciences**
- **Geosciences**
- **Engineering**
- **Technology areas associated with the preceding fields (for example, biotechnology, chemical technology, engineering technology, information technology, etc.)**



ELIGIBILITY



Eligibility - Institution

- **An institution may submit one proposal from each constituent college or school that awards eligible degrees.**
- **An institution without constituent schools (for example, a 4-year college or a community college) may submit one proposal each year.**
- **An institution that is part of a larger system (e.g. a separate campus) is considered separate for this purpose if it is geographically separate and has its own chief academic officer.**



Eligibility - Institution

Example 1:



A university with a College of Engineering, a School of Life Sciences, and a College of Arts and Sciences could submit one proposal from each for a total of three.

Example 2:



Within a College of Engineering, the Department of Electrical Engineering and the Department of Mechanical Engineering could not each submit a proposal. Both proposals would be returned without review.

Example 3:



Two departments within a College of Engineering could submit a single proposal jointly.



Eligibility - PI

The Principal Investigator (PI) must be a faculty member currently teaching in one of the S-STEM disciplines listed in the solicitation.

- Biological sciences (except medicine and other clinical fields)
- Physical sciences, including physics, chemistry, astronomy, and materials science
- Mathematical sciences
- Computer and information sciences
- Geosciences
- Engineering
- Technology areas associated with the preceding fields (for example, biotechnology, chemical technology, engineering technology, information technology, etc.)



Eligibility – Scholarship Recipients

- Citizens of the US, nationals of the US ¹, aliens admitted as refugees to the US ², or aliens lawfully admitted to the US for permanent residence;
- Be enrolled full time in a program leading to an associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degree in one of the listed disciplines³ for each term for which a student receives a scholarship.
- Demonstrate academic ability or potential;
- Demonstrate financial need; ⁴ and
- Be part of a natural student cohort that is likely to associate during the scholarship period. ⁵

¹As defined in section 101(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

²Under section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

³Biological sciences (except medicine and other clinical fields); physical sciences, including physics, chemistry, astronomy, and materials science; mathematical sciences; computer and information sciences; geosciences; engineering; technology areas associated with the preceding fields (for example, biotechnology, chemical technology, engineering technology, information technology, etc.).

⁴Defined for undergraduate students by the US Department of Education rules for need-based Federal financial aid Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), or, for graduate students, defined as financial eligibility for Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN).

⁵Students may be from a single major, or from a group that will take several classes together, or from some other group that the proposal describes.



Scholarships

- **Students may use the scholarships to cover tuition and other costs of attendance as defined by the institution.**
- **Maximum scholarship amount: \$10,000 per student per academic year.**



PROPOSAL SECTIONS



Project Description Contents

- **Results from Prior NSF Support**
- **Project Objectives and Plans**
- **Significance of Project and Rationale**
- **Activities on Which the Current Project Builds**
- **S-STEM Project Management Plan**
- **Student Selection Process and Criteria**
- **S-STEM Student Support Services and Programs**
- **Quality Educational Programs**
- **Assessment and Evaluation**
- **Dissemination**



Results from Prior NSF Support

- If the institution has received a prior S-STEM (or CSEMS) award, the proposed project must build on the experience from the prior project.
- Proposers may use the NSF web search to search for prior awards in the S-STEM program, by institution name or state.
- Proposal reviewers will want to know quantitative and qualitative outcomes of any current or former project and how the experience has affected plans for the current project.
- This section must include all applicable items (a through f) listed in the Grant Proposal Guide, Chapter II, Section C.2.d.iii.



Project Objectives and Plans

The project should have:

- **Specific objectives that reflect the goals of the S-STEM program and local workforce needs; and**
- **Specific plans to select students, encourage them to achieve their best academic performance, and enable them to enter the workforce or continue graduate studies in their fields.**



Significance and Rationale

The proposal should address how the goals of the S-STEM program will be met.

The proposal should include:

- **Information on the demographics of the departments or programs affected by the scholarships including:**
 - **Number of majors per year**
 - **Number of graduates per year**
 - **Information on overall enrollment and retention within the institution and programs involved**
- **A rationale for the number of scholarships and the scholarship amount requested**



Activities on Which the Current Project Builds

S-STEM projects should build on existing student support structures and program elements.

Proposals should:

- **Discuss such services that are relevant to the S-STEM project**
- **Describe ways in which the S-STEM project will use or enhance the structures**
- **Describe new support structures set up for S-STEM students**



Project Management Plan - Personnel

- **The roles and responsibilities of the personnel involved should be clear.**
- **The PI will have overall responsibility for administering the project and for interacting with NSF.**
- **The project must involve faculty in addition to the PI and may involve staff from offices of student support, financial aid, and admissions.**
- **The proposal must describe specific roles of each person in the project.**



Project Management Plan - Activities

Plans should be described for activities such as:

- **Recruitment and selection of talented students**
- **Maintenance of S-STEM records**
- **Reporting responsibilities**
- **Oversight for student support services**
- **Implementing a process by which students who lose S-STEM eligibility will either be placed on probation or replaced by new students**



Student Selection Process and Criteria

- Projects should have additional selection criteria that reflect the local context.
- The selection process for scholarship recipients should include indicators of academic merit and other indicators of likely professional success.
- Selection criteria should be flexible enough to accommodate applicants who come from diverse backgrounds and with diverse career goals.
- The program encourages but does not require efforts to increase the number of members of underrepresented groups in STEM fields; its broad aim is to assist any student who meets eligibility requirements.
- The proposal should indicate how students' eligibility will be determined, the mechanisms by which scholarships for students will be provided, and how scholarship program outcomes will be evaluated and disseminated. It should also identify criteria for retention of students' scholarships from one year to the next.



S-STEM Student Support Services and Programs

Examples of student support include:

- **Recruitment of students to higher education programs and careers in the S-STEM disciplines**
- **Support and mentoring of students by faculty and other professionals**
- **Academic support services such as tutoring, study-groups, or supplemental instruction programs**
- **Industry experiences, internship opportunities, and research opportunities (Optional)**
- **Community building and support among S-STEM scholars within the institution**
- **Participation in local or regional professional, industrial or scientific meetings and conferences**
- **Career counseling and job placement services for S-STEM scholars**



Quality Educational Programs

- **Institutions should provide evidence of the quality of their educational programs, particularly in the targeted disciplines.**
- **Where appropriate, cite external accreditations in the S-STEM disciplines (e.g., ABET for engineering).**



Assessment and Evaluation

- S-STEM projects must have clear and specific plans for assessment and evaluation.
- The evaluator must be external to the project, but not necessarily to the institution.
- S-STEM projects are required to participate in regular NSF-led data collection activities to track the students.
- The S-STEM proposal should identify appropriate assessment and evaluation plans as well as plans for programmatic evaluation at the end of the project.



Dissemination

- The proposal should include a plan to report on the project to appropriate audiences.
- The results of successful projects will be of potential interest to other faculty, staff, students, and the community of which the institution is a part, as well as to student aid professionals and others who operate scholarship programs.



BUDGET

- **The maximum S-STEM request is normally not to exceed \$600,000 direct cost in total for all years of the project.**
- **Annual budgets are limited to \$225,000 direct cost.**
- **The proposal should include a formula to indicate how the final total budget was calculated.**
- **Up to 5% of scholarship funds are allowed to grantee institutions for management and administrative costs; up to 10 percent of scholarship funds are allowed for student-support costs. This 15% will bear indirect costs (ICR). NOTE: NO ICR allowed on Participant Support.**



Outcomes

Example Indicators of Success for Scholars

- Graduation with time to degree being less than for a typical STEM student in the program/institution
- Pathways into the workforce or advanced degrees
- The potential for a worthwhile career in the local community

Questions to Consider

- What is the total number of scholars graduated?
- What will be the legacy for the faculty and academic department(s)?
- How will program elements be sustained after the funding period?
- Is there a clear plan to support scholars who may not graduate prior to the end of NSF funding?
- What is the evidence of the effectiveness of the student support services/efforts?



Graduate Students

- The program includes support for graduate students.
- Some projects may be exclusively for graduate students.
- Support systems and mentoring likely to be different than for undergraduates.
- Research should be required for graduate students as part of project.



Characteristics of a Strong Project

- **It is not sufficient to summarize the role of individual faculty.**
 - Each proposal should include a detailed management plan that includes project logistics, a timeline and metrics used to demonstrate progress.
- **The project evaluation is modest, but should include the collection of empirical evidence.**
 - What will project managers learn?
 - What will NSF and others learn?
- **The evaluator must be external to the project, but not necessarily to the institution.**
- **The Project Description (and references) should show clear evidence of the research/evidence base upon which the project will build.**



COMMON QUESTIONS: GENERAL



Q: We are asked to describe student support services in both sections (d) and (g). Can you explain the difference between what you expect to see in each of those sections

A: Section 5(d) should contain a general description of existing and newly proposed student support structures for the S-STEM students, and may refer to section 5(g), which should contain a detailed description of how these structures will be adapted/adopted to meet S-STEM program objectives.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Besides the project summary, do we need to include specific sections to address Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts in the Project Description or elsewhere?

A: The Project Description is not required to contain the headings "Intellectual Merit" and "Broader Impacts"; however, it must clearly describe how these criteria are met. There should be separate subheadings within Results from Prior NSF Support that address the intellectual merit and broader impacts of those efforts. Please refer to the Grant Proposal Guide (<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpgprint.pdf>) for more information.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Could you discuss the data management plan and how it is to be organized? Is this essentially dissemination?

A: Although dissemination is a part of data management, the Data Management Plan is far more extensive. Please refer to the Grant Proposal Guide, which is available online at

<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpgprint.pdf>, for Data Management Plan requirements.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Once the proposal is submitted, when can we expect to hear back from you?

A: Typical response time for most recommendations for awards or declinations is six months from the proposal due date.

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Q: Can a graduate student who is supported by this program conduct research in the educational aspects of STEM? For example, can a student who is earning an M.S or Ph.D. in geoscience conduct research in geoscience education?

A: Yes, as long as it is a part of the student's thesis/dissertation research. S-STEM scholarships may not be, nor appear to be, payment for services.

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Q: Is it possible to view past proposals that were successful in earning the grant? If not, is there a way we can see a list of community colleges that were awarded, so that we can contact them to see if they would share their experiences and/or proposal?

A: Program Officers cannot share proposals; however, copies of proposals may be obtained by either making a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request (<http://www.nsf.gov/policies/foia.jsp>) or by contacting an existing PI. A link to recent awards appears at the bottom of the S-STEM home page (http://nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5257). Additional awards may be identified using NSF's Awards Search tool (<http://nsf.gov/awardsearch/advancedSearch.jsp>). Both links will lead to contact information for PIs who have successfully competed for S-STEM awards.

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Q: What should we list as the start date of the proposal? Is Fall 2015 appropriate?

A: The project start date will depend upon the timeline of individual projects. Realistically, proposals submitted for the August 12, 2014 due date should have start dates no earlier than February 1, 2015.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Can you give some examples of "How will program elements be sustained after the funding period?"

A: As an example, if the project includes plans to develop new student support services/programs, the proposal should include evidence that the department/college will continue and/or institutionalize those program elements if they prove to be successful.

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Q: Can you give examples of "What is the evidence of the effectiveness of the student support services/efforts?"

A: The student support service efforts described in the proposal should be assessed and evaluated to determine how well they contribute to the attainment of the project's objectives and outcomes. For example, if improving retention is one of the project's expected outcomes, there should be a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of program elements that contribute to student retention. It is highly recommended that PIs engage a qualified evaluator during the proposal development stage so that the evaluation plan is devised to effectively address the objectives and outcomes. If the project is building upon existing student support services, the proposal should include data that demonstrates that the services have proven to be effective for prior students.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: What value is put on research publications from the grant?

A: The results of successful projects will be of potential interest to other faculty, staff, students, and the community of which the institution is a part, as well as to student aid professionals and others who operate scholarship programs. The proposal should include a plan to disseminate what is learned from the planned S-STEM project implementation.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Is it acceptable to focus exclusively on retention of students in STEM rather than recruitment?

A: Participating institutions are expected to support the goals of the S-STEM program including the following:
improved educational opportunities for students;
increased retention of students to degree achievement;
improved student support programs at institutions of higher education; and increased numbers of well-educated and skilled employees in technical areas of national need. In order to address these goals, recruitment efforts are needed.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



COMMON QUESTIONS: PI ELIGIBILITY



Q: Can the PI be someone who is currently on sabbatical but will return by the time the funding period starts?

A: Yes.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Can the PI be a faculty member with temporary and/or part time status such as an adjunct lecturer or instructor?

A: The Principal Investigator must be a faculty member currently teaching in one of the S-STEM disciplines who can provide the leadership required to ensure the success of the project. If the faculty member is a lecturer/instructor, the proposal must clearly demonstrate that he/she has the institutional commitment and team required to lead the project throughout the proposed duration. This may be difficult in some cases, and especially so for part-time faculty.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Can a staff member or an administrator be a Co-PI?

A: Yes

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Q: Since NSF only allows five Co-PIs, if an S-STEM project covers the whole college (having more than five departments) with each department needing to have a Co-PI, how can this be managed?

A: The FastLane Cover Sheet allows a maximum of five investigators. Additional faculty members may be included as Senior Personnel.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



COMMON QUESTIONS: STUDENT ELIGIBILITY



Q: Can a faculty member in one department fund students who will be enrolled in any of the other STEM departments or does the funding only go to students in the PI's department?

A: Scholarship recipients are not all required to be students in the PI's department. For example, the PI may be an electrical engineering faculty member, who is proposing an S-STEM project that supports students from multiple engineering disciplines (mechanical, civil, industrial, etc.). There should, however, be faculty members who are Co-PIs and/or Senior Personnel from the targeted departments/disciplines.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Can we show a preference for in-state vs. out-of-state students in the selection criteria?

A: All applicants who meet the criteria for scholarship eligibility specified in the proposal must be given equal consideration, though award amounts will vary due to unmet financial need.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Can we show a preference for specific majors in the selection criteria?

A: All applicants who meet the criteria for scholarship eligibility specified in the proposal must be given equal consideration.

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Q: Does becoming high school teacher in STEM discipline count toward adequate career pathway for S-STEM? Many of our students like to keep all options open, and sign up for secondary education on top of their STEM major.

A: As long as the student's major is in one of the areas listed in Section IV.C of NSF 12-529 then additional majors, minors, or other options may be pursued.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Is there an academically talented "threshold" for scholarship recipients, i.e. would it count against a program proposing a lower limit GPA of 2.6 versus 3.0?

A: There is no minimum GPA threshold required by the solicitation; however, if a "low" GPA is proposed without justification, the proposal will likely be reviewed unfavorably. The solicitation requires that scholarship recipients "demonstrate academic ability or potential". It is up to the PI to clearly define and demonstrate this "ability" or "potential". If, for example, students who enter a program at an institution with a GPA of 2.6 are typically "successful" in improving their GPAs, completing degrees, obtaining employment, etc., the proposal should provide data to show this.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Is it ok to accept students at 2.75 GPA or better and once in the program require students to maintain 3.0 or better to remain eligible?

A: The solicitation requires that scholarship recipients "demonstrate academic ability or potential". It is up to the PI to clearly define and demonstrate this "ability" or "potential". It is acceptable to have step-wise requirements for improved GPAs, especially if starting with a lower threshold. Keep in mind that the expectation of improved performance must be well-rationalized, and preferably, supported by evidence of strategies that have proven successful in the past.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: If a student falls below the threshold GPA, can you recruit a promising transfer student and award them the remaining scholarship amount?

A: This will depend upon how the proposed S-STEM project is structured. The solicitation requires that the project management plan include a description of the process by which students who lose S-STEM eligibility will be replaced by new students.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Can S-STEM students be federal or state employees?

A: Yes, as long as they meet the eligibility criteria described in the solicitation.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Can we recruit only URM students for the award (for example, students from the LSAMP program)?

A: All applicants who meet the criteria for scholarship eligibility specified in the proposal must be given equal consideration.

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Q: Can we create a "graduated scholarship program" to encourage progression through the program (not necessarily based on financial need)? The idea is to use scholarships as a recruitment and retention mechanism, i.e., students that retain, earn more stipend funds each additional semester they are in the program.

A: S-STEM scholarships may be adjusted each semester or academic year; however, the amounts cannot violate the financial need requirement, nor the \$10,000 per year maximum award as described in the solicitation.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Can we do a comparison, e.g. all scholarship applicants are welcome, but can we track first generation students compared to all scholarship recipients?

A: All applicants who meet the criteria for scholarship eligibility specified in the proposal must be given equal consideration; however, it is acceptable to track and assess performance of groups within the cohorts of scholarship recipients as a part of project evaluation. For example, one might compare the retention of first-generation S-STEM scholars to that of non-S-STEM first generation students in the major as one means of determining the project's impacts.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



COMMON QUESTIONS: PRIOR SUPPORT



Q: If we have received an REU (Research Experiences for Undergraduates) grant, but not an S-STEM award, should that be included in the results from prior funding section?

A: The proposal must report on the results from related prior NSF support in addition to existing or prior S-STEM (or CSEMS) awards. If the REU is related to the proposed S-STEM project, it should be discussed.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: If an institution received an S-STEM project in a different college a number of years ago, is this considered prior support?

A: Yes. If there have been any existing or prior S-STEM (formerly CSEMS) projects at the institution, the proposal must provide quantitative and qualitative information about them and describe the relationship of this proposed project to the other S-STEM or CSEMS project.

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Q: Should we include results from an MRI grant?

A: The proposal must report on the results from related prior NSF support in addition to existing or prior S-STEM (or CSEMS) awards. If the MRI is related to the proposed S-STEM, it should be discussed.

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COMMON QUESTIONS: MANAGEMENT PLAN



Q: When there are non-academic (student support) personnel as senior personnel on the project, do they submit the same short CV, or is there another form?

A: The biosketch format is the same for all personnel. The required format can be found in the Grant Proposal Guide, which is available online at

<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpgprint.pdf>.

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Q: The scholarship will be advertised, in part, by the Admissions Office. These personnel will not be supported through the S-STEM grant. Do I need to list the personnel in the Admissions Office as Senior Personnel in the Management Plan?

A: No, Admissions Office staff need not be listed as Senior Personnel. However, their role in the recruitment process should be clearly described in the Project Management Plan, and the Supplementary Documents should include a letter from the Admissions Office documenting the contribution to the project. This human resource contribution should also be discussed in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources document.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Does the project need to budget some support for all Co-PIs and senior personnel, or they can just perform their tasks for the project as part of their regular academic duties?

A: The proposal does not have to include support for all personnel; however, the Current and Pending Support forms should clearly show the number of person-months that each person will commit to the project.

Additionally, all human resource contributions that are not charged to the project should be discussed in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources document.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



COMMON QUESTIONS: SCHOLARSHIPS AS STIPENDS



Q: Can S-STEM funds be used to provide an internship stipend for scholarship recipients either as a continuation of the scholarship after graduation, or as a form of student support?

A: S-STEM scholarships may not be, nor appear to be, payment for services. The budget may include salaries (budget line item B) for students; however, S-STEM scholars cannot be required/compelled to take on roles that require them to work. With the exception of a proposal that includes plans to support students who transition from undergraduate to graduate programs, S-STEM funds cannot be used to support students after graduation.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



COMMON QUESTIONS: TRAVEL



Q: Does this grant require the PI to attend and/or present at the NSF Awardee Conference? If so, can funds for that be requested in the grant budget?

A: The S-STEM program does not have an annual awardees conference. It is expected, however, that impacts/results of S-STEM projects be disseminated. If the proposal contains plans for conference presentations, the budget should include travel funds to support this.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Can travel funds for students to attend conferences be included in the 'scholarship' portion of the budget?

A: No. Funds for participant travel are to be budgeted in line item F.2 (Participant Support Costs – Travel).

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.




COMMON QUESTIONS: EVALUATION PLAN



Q: Can the evaluator be another faculty member who teaches STEM courses?

A: Yes, but the proposal should show that the evaluator is qualified (a biosketch should be included showing evaluation expertise), and in order to ensure objectivity, he/she should be external to the project (i.e., not a Co-PI, and for optimal objectivity, preferably not from the same department or unit).

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Where in the budget can we allocate funds for an external evaluator? What's the maximum budget can be allocated for the evaluator?

A: If the evaluator is a university employee, his/her salary must be included in line item A or B with appropriate fringe benefits included in line item C. If he/she is external to the institution, the expense should be budgeted in line item G.3, Consultant Services. There is no specified maximum for evaluation expenses; however, this is included in the administrative allowance of a maximum of 5% of the scholarship amount.

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Q: Are there any good examples of evaluation plans?

A: It is suggested that PIs involve the evaluator in proposal development, as he/she will be knowledgeable of elements that are required in an evaluation plan. As evaluation plans are tailored to the project activities, there is no one best example of an evaluation plan.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



COMMON QUESTIONS: BUDGET



Because we have received numerous questions regarding the budget and the 5% and 10% allowances for administrative and student support costs, respectively, we have provided the following table to give examples of how the costs are allocated. Please note that this is only a sample calculation; individual budgets will vary.

Stipends (scholarships, line item F.1)	\$500,000
Allowable Administrative Costs (5% of line item F.1) <i>This includes salaries (line items A and B), fringe benefits (line item C), travel (line item E) and other direct costs (line item G) related to the administration of the project and its evaluation.</i>	\$25,000
Allowable Student Support Services Costs (10% of line item F.1) <i>This includes expenditures that directly support the students such as salaries for mentors, tutors, etc. (line items A and B) and the associated fringe benefits (line item C), travel for recruitment purposes (line item E), participant travel and subsistence (line items F.2 and F.3) and other direct costs for recruitment and direct student support (line item G).</i>	\$50,000
Total Sample Direct Costs (\$600,000 is the maximum allowable)	\$575,000
**Note: Indirect costs may cause the total budget to exceed \$600,000. Participant Support Costs (line item F) cannot be included in indirect cost calculations. Pls should work with their Sponsored Programs Office to ensure that indirect costs are calculated properly	

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Q: What expenses cannot be included in the indirect costs?

A: Indirect cost calculations are specific to individual institutions. PIs should work with their Sponsored Programs Office to ensure that indirect costs are calculated properly, noting that NSF will not pay indirect costs on Participant Support allocations (budget line item F).

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Is there a scholarship number that is viewed as being too few?

A: There is not a minimum number of scholarship awards. The proposal must clearly explain the rationale behind the number and amount of scholarship awards proposed.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Is the priority to assist more students, or to make the awards as large as the need for an individual student?

A: It is up to the individual PIs to determine what balance of approaches are best suited to the needs of the students they intend to support at their institution.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Can part of the S-STEM scholarship be designated to fund summer courses?

A: Awards can only be made to students who are enrolled full-time in an eligible program of study. PIs may propose to support students during the summer; however, the students must be enrolled full-time.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: If research opportunities are offered to S-STEM scholars, can there be money for lab supplies?

A: Research opportunities must be optional. PIs should consider carefully if paying for lab supplies is the best use of student support funds.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Does the cost of the evaluator need to be included in the 5% administrative costs?

A: Yes, expenses related to project evaluation are considered as administrative.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Can faculty get release time for this project?

A: It is up to the department chair/dean to determine whether or not a faculty member will be given release time. If release time is given, this should be discussed in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources document and the Supplemental Documents should include a letter from the approving administrator describing this commitment.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



COMMON QUESTIONS: WORKFORCE NEEDS



Q: Our college is located in a rural area, so there are fewer STEM career opportunities nearby. Can we reference the needs of the wider area (i.e., New York State)?

A: Yes, and it would be helpful to discuss the historical post-graduation paths your students have pursued and the anticipated impact of the proposed S-STEM program on the STEM workforce.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.



Q: Is there a specific format for letters of support from other institutions and businesses?

A: There is no standard format for the letters. Please note, however, that letters should detail the contributions that the entities will make to the project's successful implementation and provide evidence of resources described in the proposal.

The responses represent the opinions of the individual program officers and not an official NSF position.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

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Full Proposal Deadline: August 12, 2014