Script for CRII webinar, Sep 10 2020

Slide 1:

Welcome to the NSF Webinar on our the Computer and Information Science and Engineering Research Initiation Initiative (CRII).

I am Jeremy Epstein, the lead program officer for NSF's Secure and Trustworthy Cyberspace program, and also the lead for the CRII program. Participating today are Almadena Chtchelkanova, Ephraim Glinert, and Alan Sussman, all program officers for the CRII program, and Henry Kautz, division director for the Information and Intelligent Systems Division.

Slide 2:

We're going to briefly summarize the goals of the program, requirements for eligibility, areas of interest to the program, the submission process, review process, and a few of the frequently asked questions. Everything in this presentation is a synopsis of the solicitation, which has more details. The recently updated FAQs have many questions and answers; if we don't cover whatever questions you have today, please check the FAQ. If you don't find the answer there, please contact one of us – our contact information is on the CRII web site, and will also be on the last slide of this presentation.

These slides will be posted to the NSF website after the conclusion of this webinar. We're going to try to keep this to an hour, but can stay longer if needed for Q&A.

Slide 3:

The most important thing to do is to READ THE SOLICITATION and then read it again!

Slide 4:

The goal of this program is to support researchers in the first 3 years of their academic positions. Importantly, the CRII program seeks to provide essential resources to enable early-career PIs to launch their research careers. For the purposes of this program, CISE defines "essential resources" as sufficient funds for 48 months of graduate student support. In particular, this program is not appropriate for PIs who already have access to resources to conduct research.

Slide 5:

Eligibility for this program has been the #1 question asked since the program began. In short, there are four parts to eligibility.

First, you must be in an academic position – not a postdoc or research associate – at a university or two-year or four-year college as of the deadline for submission. You must be in the first three years of a tenure-track or research science or education position (or equivalent). Positions in government or industry do not count against the three year limit. Neither do positions as postdocs or research associates. However, academic positions held overseas, whether tenure-track, tenured, or not, do count towards the three year limit. These limits are calculated as of the deadline for submission - Nov 2, 2020.Your primary appointment must be in an area supported by CISE – computer science, information science, or electrical or computer engineering being most common, but not exclusive. For example, you could be in a mechanical engineering department if your research is in the computing aspects of robotics or smart cars.

Second, it must have been no more than 5 years since your PhD, not counting family or medical leave. This limit is also calculated as of the deadline for submission – Nov 2, 2020.

Slide 6:

The third part of eligibility is that you have not received any grants from NSF or other agencies in the PI role. Being in the co-PI role does not disqualify, nor do any of these other types of NSF grants. Additionally, awards from your university or contracts from a company or private foundation, do not disqualify. Note that if you have a collaborative NSF grant, the lead PI from each institution is considered a PI, so even being the PI from a non-lead institution would disqualify.

The two questions in determining eligibility are (1) where does the money come from and (2) what is your role. The amount of money involved does not matter – be it small or large.

Note that the rule is as of time of <u>award</u>, not as of time of submission. So if your proposal is selected for an award, the NSF program officer will ask you to certify that you have not received any disqualifying grants.

Slide 7:

The fourth and most complex part of eligibility is available resources. The resources you have received in the past or currently have, regardless of the origin of those resources and whether or not they have been spent, must not be more than enough to support a graduate student for 24 months. Your proposal must include *at least* 24 months of graduate student support. And the two put together must be *no more* than 48 months.

So if you have 20 months of support from your startup package or other grants, you are eligible, and can request between 24 and 28 months of graduate support (24 being the minimum, 28 bringing you to a total of 48 months).

If you have 30 months of support from your startup package or other grants or sources, you are not eligible.

If 24 months of graduate student support plus the required one month of PI support is more than $175,000 when including indirect and other costs, you are not eligible.

If you're from a Predominantly Undergraduate Institution, the month formula does not need to be filled in on the department chair letter.

Slide 8:

We talked about it a few slides ago, but before moving on, just want to emphasize one more time these eligibility dates.

If your PhD was granted before Nov 2 2015, you are not eligible unless you have family or medical leave exceptions – in which case you should talk to your program officer.

If you started your academic appointment before Nov 2 2017, you are not eligible unless you have family or medical leave exceptions – in which case you should talk to your program officer.

There are no other exceptions, even if it's just by a few days. We know there are people who received their degree between Aug 2015 and Nov 2015 and were hence eligible under the old solicitation but not this one,

or similarly who started their appointment between Aug 2017 and Nov 2017. If you fall in these categories, we encourage you to consider applying to the CISE Core solicitations, the CPS program, the SaTC program, or other programs across CISE consistent with your research areas. Please don't ask for an exception, except for family or medical reasons.

Slide 9:

As said earlier, this program is open to faculty doing research in any of the areas supported by CISE. This slide lists the current CISE programs that are accepting CRII submissions. Your proposal must list at least one program which is relevant to your research proposal. Descriptions of each of the programs can be found on the NSF web site.

Strictly follow the solicitation guidelines for titling your proposal. This helps us ensure that it's seen by the appropriate program officers and reviewers.

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Slide 11:

As described in the solicitation, proposals are limited to 10 pages, not the 15 page limit most typical for NSF proposals. We are not going to review the rules for fonts and margins – please see the NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide for instructions. Trying to squeeze in more text by reducing fonts or margins is not only frustrating to reviewers, but is also likely to have your proposal returned without review.

A few other points on submission: No co-PIs or other senior personnel are permitted, however, consultants and subawardees are allowed. The proposal must be for no more than $175,000 and for exactly 2 years – no more, no less. You may only submit one CRII proposal per calendar year. A common question is whether a PI may submit both a CRII and CAREER proposal in the same calendar year; the answer is NO.

Slide 12:

The Data Management Plan is required to be submitted as a supplementary document in Fastlane. If you have included postdocs in your budget, you must also have a one-page postdoc mentoring plan, submitted as a supplementary document.

Your proposal must include a letter from your department chair certifying that you meet the eligibility requirement, including that you meet the criteria of time from PhD (within 5 years) and time of hire (no more than 3 years as of submission deadline). The letter must follow the template on the NSF website.

Slide 13:

The budget is intended to mostly be spent on students, including both undergraduates and graduates. Some fraction may go to specialized equipment, such as unique hardware or software needed for research. Some travel funds are expected. As noted, the total must not exceed $175,000. The proposal must include at least 24 months of support for graduate students, except at Primarily Undergraduate Institutions, where undergraduate students are expected.

REU supplements can be requested for CRII awards, following standard NSF policies.

Slide 14:

Proposals will be reviewed using the standard NSF merit review process, which will include consideration of both intellectual merit and broader impact. Unlike CAREER proposals, there is not a specific educational component required.

Factors that will be considered in the review process include relevance to one or more of the CISE programs (as mentioned on the previous slide), the appropriateness of the research to a 2 year window, the potential to produce sufficient preliminary research to help you prepare for other research awards such as CAREER, and whether the activities are appropriate to help you achieve research independence.

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Slide 16:

Thanks for participating in this webinar. We hope the CRII program will enable new faculty members to initiate independent research through funding students and related support.

The slides and audio will be posted to the CISE web site in the next few days.

As a final reminder, proposals are due November 2nd.

Slide 17:

We know you have lots of questions; please submit them through the Zoom chat.

Slide 18:

(Just leave this up so they can see our names)