**RaMP Webinar Q&A – January 17, 2023**

1. Is there an estimated date when funding decisions will be finalized? If it is too late to effectively recruit participants for 2024 can funding and the start of training be delayed?

*While RaMP awards will support 3 annual cohorts of mentees over 36 months, awards of up to 48 months are allowed to facilitate upfront work prior to the first cohort for network establishment, mentor training, mentee recruitment and selection, and plans for network assessment and evaluation. NSF strives to be able to tell applicants whether their proposals have been declined or recommended for funding within six months. Large or particularly complex proposals or proposals from new awardees may require additional review and processing time. The time interval begins on the deadline or target date, or receipt date, whichever is later. The interval ends when the Division Director acts upon the Program Officer's recommendation.*

1. We have been having issues with the new, January 2023, versions of forms (Current & Pending Support, *etc*.), where some fields are not fillable. Is it OK to use these to the best of our ability, even if some fields end up being blank, or is there another workaround you would suggest?

*The use of SciENcv for the C&P and Biographical Sketch is mandated for new proposals submitted or due on or after October 23, 2023. In the interim, proposers may continue to prepare and submit this document via use of SciENcv or the NSF fillable PDF (which can be found through the link below). NSF, however, encourages the community to use SciENcv prior to the October 2023 implementation. This website has all of the current information on the Collaborators and Other Affiliations, Biographical Sketch, and Current and Pending Support documents: https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/index.jsp. This includes links to templates and FAQs designed to explain their use.*

1. How many institutions (minimum) do we need to include in the proposal?

*There is no minimum or maximum number of institutions required for a network. It is expected that a proposed network will involve investigators (mentors and co-mentors) from diverse organizations, which can include a variety of institutions of higher education, industry, federal, tribal, and state agencies, not-for-profit science-based organizations, or research and teaching centers. The RaMP proposals should describe the network design and vision.*

1. If awards are announced, for example, in August 2023, can we delay the start date of the entire 4 year program to June 2024?

*Please see the answer to question number 1, above. The intent of the optional 4-year timeline is to provide up to a year for planning and organization (*e.g.*, network establishment, mentor training, mentee recruitment and selection, and plans for network assessment and evaluation) prior to the start of the first cohort of mentees.*

1. Where could we include postdoctoral candidates and participants as mentors?

*Mentors may work with co-mentors, who may include postdoctoral scholars, collaborators, and/or advanced Ph.D. students; however all individuals who serve as a mentor or co-mentor are expected to be trained in inclusive and culturally-aware mentoring strategies. Mentors are responsible for overseeing the participants’ training and coordinating activities with the co-mentors who work under the mentors’ direction. If postdocs are included in the proposal, a Postdoctoral mentoring Plan must be submitted, describing the mentoring of all postdocs in the project, including those at collaborating institutions and serving as co-mentors. Postdocs serving in these roles should be included in the Combined RaMP Participant List. A link to this required document can be found in the current solicitation.*

1. Does it matter whether we refer to the postbacc participants as “mentees” or “trainees” as long as we are consistent throughout?

*There is no requirement for either term, although the solicitation describes them as mentees. As noted, it is best to be consistent throughout your proposal.*

1. Does having an existing postbacc project, such as one funded from the NIGMS PREP program, put you at a disadvantage for RAMP?

*The presence of another postbacc project, with distinct goals, should not be a disadvantage for a RaMP proposal. However, the intent of RaMP is to establish new projects that address NSF RaMP programmatic goals, rather than funding existing projects.*

1. Can individual mentors serve multiple years with different mentees?

*Repeat mentorships are not prohibited in the network design, but the proposal must outline strategies for the recruitment, training, and inclusion of new mentors for the new cohorts of mentees to support the inclusion of a diverse community of mentors and co-mentors within the network.*

1. Do we need to submit mentors' biographical sketches with the proposal?

*Mentors and co-mentors (along with the Project Coordinator if named at the time of submission) must include Biographical Sketches, Current and Pending Support, and Collaborators and Other Affiliations information included in the Senior Personnel section of the proposal. All Senior Personnel must be listed in the “Combined RaMP Participant List Document”. A link to the template for this document may be found in the current solicitation.*

1. Can we supplement mentees’ salary to account for high housing costs?

*As described in the current solicitation, each participant will be supported by a stipend of* ***at least*** *$32,500 per year. Programs in areas with higher costs of living may adjust stipends to salary commensurate with the host institution’s relevant payroll schedule. Stipend cost may include fringe benefits to cover individual or family health insurance.*

1. Can you please confirm that the “Combined RaMP Participant List Document” is a list of Senior Personnel and other non-postbaccalaureates involved in the program?

*The RAMP participant list should be a compiled Excel list of all senior personnel, including mentors and co-mentors. The template and instruction for using it can be found here: https://www.nsf.gov/bio/dbi/RaMP\_Participant\_List.xlsx. The compiled list should be emailed to RaMP@nsf.gov immediately after you submit your proposal, but no later than 5pm EDT on the Tuesday of the week following the deadline (e.g., no later than 5 pm EDT on February 21st in 2023). This document is for the NSF internal review process. Proposals from PIs who fail to submit the required Excel document by 5PM EDT on the Tuesday of the following week will be immediately returned without review.* ***Do not use the temporary proposal number to fill out the template. You must use only an assigned NSF Proposal ID****, which should be seven digits long and will start with the fiscal year numbers (e.g., for FY23, all the Proposal ID's will start with "23"). Do not send in the RAMP participant list until you have been assigned the official NSF Proposal ID at the time of submission. Include the NSF proposal ID in the subject line and file title.*

1. Will applications for fewer than 8 participants be disqualified?

*Proposals will not be disqualified with smaller cohorts of students; nevertheless, the solicitation is clear that networks should be structured to support 8-12 post-baccalaureate mentees each year and an approximate total of 30 mentees over the course of the program.*

1. Can the PI or Co-PI serve as a mentor?

*The PI or co-PI can serve as a mentor or co-mentor; however, they need to maintain their commitment of time and energy to their responsibilities as a PI of the project. I.e., the mentoring should be in addition to responsibilities as PI.*

1. Does having a maximum number of mentees (12) affect the funding decision?

*There is no disadvantage to having 12 or the maximum number of mentees; this is within the range indicated by the solicitation, which states networks should be structured to support 8-12 post-baccalaureate mentees.*

1. Can we have access to the slides?

*Yes, the slides will be posted on the RaMP website:* [*https://beta.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/research-mentoring-postbaccalaureates-biological*](https://beta.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/research-mentoring-postbaccalaureates-biological)*.*

1. Can we have a contract with the RaMP students and mentors to lay out rights and responsibilities of both?

*We encourage developing mentoring contracts or compacts. Projects are expected to have a generalized mentoring plan, which includes individualized career-goal planning as well as use of mentoring compacts or agreements for each mentee-mentor pair that describes clear expectations related to workload and hours of participation, credit attribution of research products and publications, ethical conduct guidelines, problem-mediation strategies, and benchmarks of progress.*

1. Our proposal’s program will take place at a research institute located at a single university. The institute has 11 faculty from 4 departments. We also have 3 co-PIs from 3 PUIs who will co-develop the recruitment, training, and mentoring programs together. But all of the mentors and co-mentors will come from the research institute. Does this structure satisfy the ‘diverse organizations’ consideration?

*The network can be created in this way. As stated in the solicitation, networks may be regional or national or may have international components. It is expected that a proposed network will involve investigators (mentors and co-mentors) from diverse organizations, which can include a variety of institutions of higher education, industry, federal, tribal, and state agencies, and research and teaching centers. Network institutions or research groups should have highly qualified mentors and co-mentors who have demonstrated commitment to inclusive mentoring and broadening participation. Networks may include plans to improve cohort training practices and mentoring programs at participating institutions and network partners, expand institutional research capacity, and reduce factors that limit career transitions and training opportunities for college graduates.*

1. What evidence would be sufficient to provide a benchmark for higher participant stipend? Would an entry-level research position and a nearby university suffice? We do not have any internal positions/salary schedules for this type of role.

*Projects may adjust stipends to salary commensurate with the host institution's relevant payroll schedule, and use of this type of information is acceptable. Information relevant to cost of living and other factors including salary schedules for a similar role at a different institution can be used to justify the higher participant stipend and should be discussed in the budget justification.*

1. What is the expected career level for the Program Coordinator? Could a post-doc fill this position?

*The Project Coordinator role is a significant one in terms of its responsibilities and is typically expected to be full time to perform the many key coordinator duties as described in the solicitation in detail. Coordination is a critical element of RaMP projects and should include a sustainable commitment by those involved in the process for the entirety of the proposed project and clear plans when transitions are necessary. The use of postdoctoral position for this role is not disallowed but it may not be recommended because post-docs’ primary activities are typically research, and sometimes teaching. Coordination should not be viewed as an add-on activity to any individual performing this critical role.*

1. Is the intellectual merit section (the Science Theme) to have specific outcomes listed, or be more focused on training in a specific scientific area. In other words, how specific does this section need to be with regard to experimental design?

*The requirement of a Science Theme is described in the solicitation as follows: "As part of the Intellectual Merit of the proposal, projects must include a clearly articulated and cohesive science theme that fits within or integrates among the core research areas of the NSF BIO Directorate. The description should include the underlying conceptual framework, hypotheses, and research questions when appropriate. Research projects must focus primarily on BIO core research areas that enable discoveries for understanding life. BIO-supported research advances the frontiers of biological knowledge and proposals that creatively integrate diverse subdisciplines of biology are encouraged. Proposals must demonstrate capacity to involve participants in advanced, creative, and potentially transformative training and research opportunities with the support, mentorship, and guidance of mentors, co-mentors, and other network members required at this early career stage." Note that this includes reference to mentorship and training as well as to the scientific objectives. So, while there is a need to provide sufficient details about your objectives to the reader for clarity in scientific purpose, there is a need to balance this information with the other components of the Science Theme as well.*

1. Must mentors be named? I am considering having a graduate student serve as a co-mentor with me as a mentor, but it is not likely I have the name of that person since the program would begin in about 2 years. That mentor is even less likely to remain the mentor over the course of the program. Can we indicate a graduate mentor as “To Be Named”?

*As noted in the solicitation, approximately 8-12 mentors should be identified along with a specific plan to add and train new mentors for the second and third cohort of postbaccalaureate participants; a list of mentors and co-mentors must be submitted in the "Combined RaMP Participant List Document”. If you do not yet have the names of the mentors and/or co-mentors, please indicate so in that document.*

1. Do you have advice for Data Management Plan best practices?

*The Data Management Plan should be as comprehensive as possible within the two page limit for this document; this includes all types of data and those individuals with responsibilities for them. The solicitation notes the following: "The Directorate for Biological Sciences provides additional context and guidance to PIs on the preparation of Data Management Plans here:* [*https://www.nsf.gov/bio/biodmp.jsp*](https://www.nsf.gov/bio/biodmp.jsp)*."*

1. Is there any limit on the number of Letters of Collaboration?

*There is no limit on the number of Letters of Collaboration. Please note that Letters of Collaboration are distinct from other letters that are designed to express support for the project. Please visit the current NSF PAPPG document for the correct format to be used for these letters*

1. When thinking of diversity in careers, what are your thoughts on training people in science that ultimately take them into medical sciences? For example, working on cell growth studies, but having a partner that is a medical school.

*The Science Theme description within the current solicitation states the following: "As part of the Intellectual Merit of the proposal, projects must include a clearly articulated and cohesive science theme that fits within or integrates among the core research areas of the NSF BIO Directorate." Please review these core programs; medical themes that do not fit this criterion may be better suited to other funding agencies.*

1. Is it okay to have 9 students each year if that makes sense with our network structure?

*Yes. Nine fits within the range of 8 to 12 that is requested in the current solicitation.*

1. Do we need to have a coordinator named when we submit? This is a position we would have to hire someone into, and we cannot hire until we have funding awarded.

*If you can do so, please do name someone as the coordinator. If you do not yet have a candidate please indicate that the individual will be named at a later time and indicate what type of position the individual would be hired into at the institution, who would conduct their annual assessments and would be their supervisor. Please still record the position in the "Combined RaMP Participant List Document".*

1. Can I confirm that we can/should include outcomes from other training initiatives (e.g., NSF STC, and REUs), and that this would be in a Results from Prior NSF Support section?

*Yes. Please record this under "Results from Prior NSF Support" which is described online in the current PAPPG document.*

1. Would applications for postbaccalaureates who have not had bench studies during their college experience be accepted into the program, and could this be a focus of a particular program?

*The program goal is to offer opportunities to those who had little or no research experiences during college to facilitate entry into the STEM workforce. Regardless of the type of research to be conducted by the RaMP project, NSF is interested in providing opportunities for individuals who had no prior type of research experience of any research type. NSF is also interested in ensuring the inclusion of individuals from diverse social categories and/or identities including but not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, disability status, veteran status, or geography. We also note that mentors and co-mentors can be supported from across the network, including from Tribal Colleges and Minority-Serving Institutions.*

1. If someone will give a workshop for mentors and co-mentors about how to be a good mentor for this project, do they have to be on the “Combined RaMP Participant List Document”?

*Yes. This would require at least a Letter of Collaboration for this purpose and they should be included in the “Combined RaMP Participant List Document”.*

1. I am aware that $10,000 can be allocated for mentee support activities such as materials and supplies. We can provide travel funds for a mentee to attend a conference, but can this be in addition to that amount, or must those funds come out of the $10,000?

*The current solicitation notes the following: “Mentee-support research funds, up to $10,000 per participant per year, may be requested to cover research expenses under participant cost materials. Mentee-support professional development funds may be requested to support professional development that includes: training or workshops, travel to a national conference to present research outcomes or to enhance research training with a collaborator at a different institution (exchange visits) or in a non-academic setting to acquire new skills (e.g., industry laboratories, industry research and development groups, startup businesses, etc.). Programs may consider mechanisms to facilitate early support from stipends in order to facilitate participant needs.” Therefore, please request research expenses within the $10,000 limit as explained in your budget justification but additional funding for travel may also be requested (and justified) per Section F of the Budget (“Participant Support Costs”).*

1. I may be confusing RaMP with something that allows us to extend our REU Site funds to students who graduated during COVID. is there a formal program for doing that, or case-by-case with the Program Director?

*Extending REU Site funding is not a goal of the RaMP Program.*

1. Does the official “network” include an institution primarily involved in recruitment, or only institutions with mentors? We were thinking the ones we recruit from would provide a letter of collaboration but not be part of the network because they are PUIs without mentors that have the bandwidth for a full time postbaccalaureate researcher.

*Letters of Collaboration can be used for this purpose. However, Collaborators will not receive direct support (e.g., as a mentor or co-mentor would receive). Letters of Collaboration can be included from individuals or organizations that are integral to the proposed project but are neither senior personnel nor supported by subawards. This may include subsidiary involvement in some aspect of the project, cooperation on recruitment, mentoring, or training efforts.*

1. Do you have a target percentage of the budget that Participant Support should comprise?

*No. The appropriateness of the distribution of funding would be assessed according to the network strategy and in fulfilling programmatic goals of the project.*

1. If we are collaborating with PUI colleagues to recruit postbaccalaureates, are the PUI faculty considered part of the network if they will not mentor the Postbaccalaureates and therefore required to be listed in the “Combined RaMP Participant List Document”?

*While a Letter of Collaboration might suffice, full participants in your network should also be considered for funding allocations. Either way, they should be listed in the “Combined RaMP Participant List Document”.*

1. Am I correct in understanding that this is the first year for this specific program? I am having a hard time conceptualizing what this program would look like, and what is meant by "network", are there any more specific examples or ideas you have has POs for what you are looking for as far as program structure?

*This is not the first year of the RaMP program, and a link to the full list of awards (with descriptions of proposed work) can be found with the following link:* [*https://beta.nsf.gov/news/new-nsf-awards-seek-broaden-participation-biology*](https://beta.nsf.gov/news/new-nsf-awards-seek-broaden-participation-biology)*.*

1. How will co-mentor investment be evaluated? Can you give some budgetary guidelines for co-mentor participation?

*As described in the current solicitation, mentors may work with co-mentors, who may include postdoctoral scholars, collaborators, and/or advanced Ph.D. students; however all individuals who serve as a mentor or co-mentor are expected to be trained in inclusive and culturally aware mentoring strategies. The current solicitation also states that mentors and their co-mentors may be provided up to a total of $10,000 dollars per year in order to support their time commitment to mentoring, training and professional development activities.*