Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) Track-1 Awards

ANNUAL and FINAL REPORT GUIDELINES
2025

A) 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.

B) 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 the 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 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.

C) Beginning your work with the EDOCS system

All 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.

D) 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 <u>clear, specific, and succinct summary</u> of the progress achieved for the project's research and other elements during the <u>current reporting period</u>. Only one narrative report should be submitted; separate 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 project's strategic plan) 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.

E) Required Sections of the Narrative Report

<u>Heading</u>: Identify the award number and title, awardee institution, PI, other participating institutions, award start date, report submission date, and reporting period dates.

<u>Overview</u>: 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 jurisdiction's interests. (1 page or less).

<u>Executive Summary:</u> Provide a summary (5 pages or less) of the key accomplishments achieved during the reporting period, <u>addressing the NSF criteria of intellectual merit and broader impacts</u>. 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.

<u>Research and Capacity-Building:</u> Describe the major accomplishments and research/capacity-building findings during the current reporting period, organized by the major goals or focus areas of the project, as put forth in the original proposal and approved strategic plan. 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. Describe problems, unexpected results, and novel opportunities encountered and your response to them. The narrative should be based

on the specific research goals and objectives described in the strategic plan. Objectives, milestones, and outcomes should be mentioned, and it should be clearly stated whether the project is ahead of, on, or behind schedule for each. In cases where the project is behind schedule, the reason(s) for the delay and plans to get back on schedule should also be discussed.

Solicitation-Specific Project Elements: Describe the project's progress and achievements with respect to each of the additional project elements identified in the solicitation under which the award was made. Generally, this will require report sections on:

    Education and Workforce Development
    Emerging Areas and Seed Funding
    Broadening Participation
    Partnerships and Collaborations
    Communication and Dissemination
    Sustainability
    Management, Evaluation and Assessment

As with the Research and Capacity-Building section above, describe the project's major accomplishments, the problems and opportunities encountered, and your response to those challenges, and summarize products. Evidence of linkages, coordination, and collaboration with other NSF-funded programs should be provided where appropriate. Identify the principal individuals and institutions responsible for each major activity/accomplishment, as well as significant collaborations. For each section, report on the year's progress against the strategic plan. A reasonable number of figures may be included in this section, as needed to assist in reporting.

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; recommendations made through the Reverse Site Visit and Site Visit processes (if applicable); and any other actions required by NSF EPSCoR. The project's external evaluation report or plan should be separately provided, but any significant changes to project activities implemented in response to external evaluator or advisory board recommendations may also be described in this section.

<u>Tabular/Graphic Representation of Progress To-Date</u>: Include a table(s) showing progress to date relative to all goals and objectives of the project as stated in the strategic plan. The table(s) should indicate milestones and specific outcomes and include an easily interpretable representation (e.g., a green/yellow/red "stoplight" color scheme, or other preferred format) of whether items have been accomplished, are on schedule, or are behind schedule. The tabular representations should be referenced in the narratives above and be fully consistent with the strategic plan. It may be most convenient to use the same tabular format found in the strategic plan.

F) 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 E).
- The External Evaluation Plan (in Year 1) or the External Evaluation Report (in Years 2 to 5).
- The project's response to the External Evaluation Report (in Years 2 to 5).
- The report of any external advisory body that convened during the reporting year.
- The project's response to the report of an external advisory body, if applicable.
- Three EPSCoR Highlights, associated images, and image release forms (using NSF Form 1515). Please download the current NSF Form 1515 here. An EPSCoR Highlight is a crisp, one-page summary with an interesting and informative image highlighting the NSF-funded work. NSF EPSCoR uses these highlights to illustrate the work that the program supports. They might be used in NSF documents and presentations or posted on NSF web pages, for example. The text and graphics should be at the level of a press release, explaining briefly and in <u>non-technical</u> language what has been accomplished and why it is significant. At least one highlight should relate to the project's research, and at least one should describe a non-research project element (e.g., education, outreach, workforce development, broadening participation). Each highlight submission should include an appropriate high-resolution image as a separate file and an image release form.

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

G) 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-1 awards do not use Research.gov for submission of Annual Report content, 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 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 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.

H) Highlight Template

{Highlight Title; suggested 20-word maximum}

{Lead Participating Personnel}

Award Title:	
NSF Award Number:	
Principal Investigator:	
Lead Institution Name:	
Award Start Date:	
Award End Date:	
Highlight Submission Date:	

What is the outcome or accomplishment? (1-2 short sentences describing it and why it is transformative; 50-word maximum suggested)*

Example: A team of scientists has shown that a rock from Antarctica is identical to a band of rocks in western North America, implying that the two continents were once adjacent to one another.

What is the impact? (1-2 simple sentences describing the benefits for science, industry, society, the economy, national security, *etc.*; suggested 50-word maximum)

Example: Determining the past configuration of the continents can serve many purposes, including modeling past climates, understanding evolution, and helping to locate natural resources.

What explanation/background does the lay reader need to understand the significance of this outcome? (1-2 paragraphs that might include, for example, more on who, when, where; NSF's role; support from multiple directorates/offices; what makes this accomplishment unique; additional intellectual merits; or broader impacts such as education, outreach, or infrastructure improvement that are integral to this outcome; suggested 150-word maximum)

Example: We currently have a good understanding of the last amalgamation of continents called Pangea, which existed from 545 to 180 million years ago and allowed land-dwelling organisms to proliferate across the globe. However, we have poor information on the previous amalgamation-- Rodinia--which formed about 1.3 billion years ago. Determining Rodinia's characteristics are key to understanding the origins of complex life on Earth, as well as understanding the snowball Earth period, when the entire globe froze over.

The rock study, conducted by a multi-university team, supports the juxtaposition of East Antarctica with western Laurentia at that time. Laurentia is the continent that, at the time, included the landmasses now known as North America and Greenland. Previously, scientists had suggested that China or Siberia had been adjacent to this coast.