

*A national program to coordinate readiness  
and accelerate deployment*

Email: [ai-ready@nsf.gov](mailto:ai-ready@nsf.gov)



**Important Deadlines for round 1**  
**State/Territory Coordination Hubs:**  
**Letter of Intent: June 16, 2026**  
**Full Proposal: July 16, 2026**  
**(Due by 5 p.m. submitting  
organization's local time)**

• TECHACCESS: •

# AI-READY AMERICA

**Webinar for Solicitation NSF 26-508:**  
**State/Territory Coordination Hubs**

**April 14, 2026**



# Agenda

<b>Opening and Welcome</b>	Erwin Gianchandani, Assistant Director, TIP/NSF
<b>Program Overview</b>	Michal Ziv-El, Program Director, TIP/NSF
<b>Proposal Preparation and Review</b>	Nasser Alaraje, Program Director, EDU/NSF
<b>Frequently Asked Questions</b>	Greg Peterson, Program Director, CISE/NSF
<b>Closing</b>	Michal Ziv-El

- Questions can be submitted in the webinar Q&A or emailed to [ai-ready@nsf.gov](mailto:ai-ready@nsf.gov)
- Webinar recording will be available on the program's initiative page: <https://www.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/ai-ready>
- Direct link to NSF-26-508: <https://www.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/techaccess-ai-ready-america>

# Opening and Welcome



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# The Opportunity:

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly reshaping the U.S. economy and workforce, creating significant opportunities for innovation, productivity, and growth. Yet many states and communities lack the infrastructure, coordination, and workforce capacity needed to fully benefit from these advances. Addressing these gaps requires a coordinated national approach to AI readiness.



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# MISSION

PROMOTE the progress of science

ADVANCE the national health, prosperity, and welfare

SECURE the national defense



# NSF Supports All Areas of Science and Engineering

## A New “Horizontal”: Strengthen, Scale Use-Inspired and Translational Research



Integrative Activities

International Science & Engineering

# Program Overview



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## Coordination across the federal government



**Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (TIP)**

**Directorate for STEM Education (EDU)**

**Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE)**



# Working Group Members

For program questions/inquiries, email: [ai-ready@nsf.gov](mailto:ai-ready@nsf.gov)



**Michal Ziv-El**  
Program Director NSF/TIP



**Greg Peterson**  
Program Director, NSF/CISE



**Nasser Alaraje**  
Program Director, NSF/EDU



**Sarah Dunton**  
Program Director, NSF/Strategic  
Partnerships Hub



**Chaitan Baru**  
Section Head for  
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Technologies, NSF/TIP



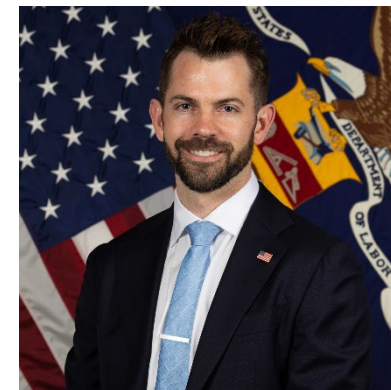
**Mary Crowe**  
Section Head for  
Workforce Capacity  
Building, NSF/TIP



**Nathan Putnam**  
Senior Policy Advisor,  
US Small Business  
Administration



**Rubella Goswami**  
Deputy Director Institute of  
Youth, Family and  
Community, USDA-NIFA



**Taylor Stockton**  
Chief Innovation  
Officer, US  
Department of Labor



## **Mission:**

Expand access to AI knowledge, tools, training, and capacity building so all Americans can participate in — and benefit from — the AI economy.

## **Impact:**

A future where every individual, community, and business in America thrives in an AI-driven economy.

## **Primary Beneficiaries:**

Individuals • Small Businesses • Civic Organizations  
• Workforce

## **Program Definitions:**

**AI-Ready** = continuum of literacy, proficiency, and fluency (understand, apply, create).

**AI-literacy** starts with “Why AI?” and “When AI?”



## Program Goals:


- 1) Enable all Americans to be **AI-literate** and **AI-ready**.
- 2) Empower **businesses**—especially small and emerging enterprises—to adopt AI to increase competitiveness, productivity, and growth.
- 3) Support **local government and organizations** in harnessing the power of AI to **improve public services** and **spur local innovation**.
- 4) Strengthen **workforce capacity** to **apply and innovate with AI** across education, business and economic sectors, and public services.





## Program Approach:



- **Coordination at its core!** Local, state, and national.
- **Act quickly to kickstart and scale!** Pilot rapidly where gaps exist and scale what works.
- **Don't reinvent!** Leverage the best ideas and networks across the country.
  - *State-focused coordination efforts: E.g. USDA's state and local Cooperative Extension System, SBA's Small Business Development Centers, DOL's America Job Centers, NSF's State EPSCoR offices*
  - *NSF funded programs/projects: E.g. National Artificial Intelligence Research Institutes, National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource Pilot, National Applied AI Consortium Award (Advanced Tech Education Program), AI PD Weeks: CS Foundations for Creating with AI Award*

# Program Components and Investment Strategy

 **State/Territory Coordination Hubs:**  
(one in every state/territory)

 **National Coordination Lead:**  
(single award)

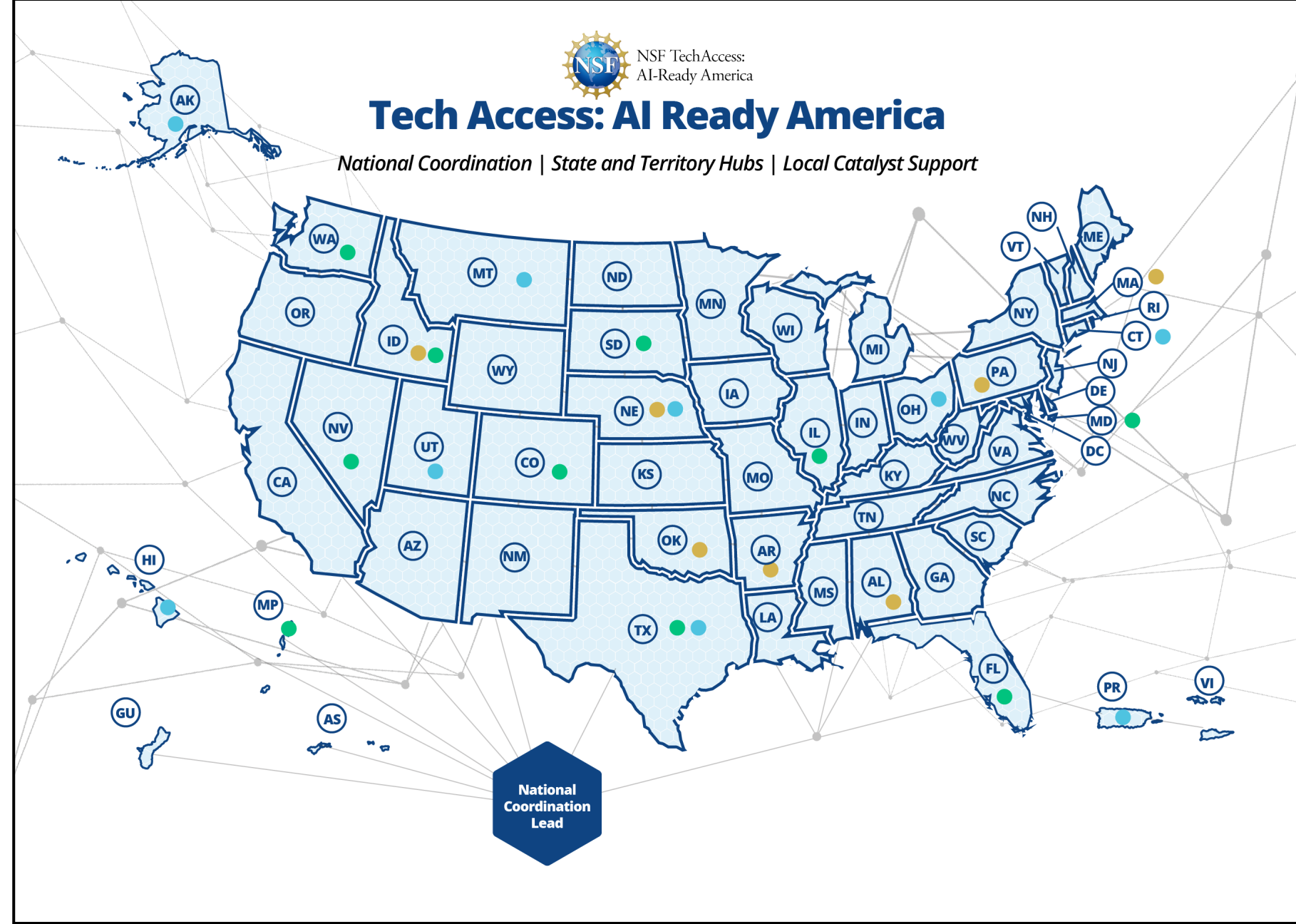
 **AI-Ready Catalyst Award Competitions**  
(illustrative examples of three competitions)



## Tech Access: AI Ready America

National Coordination | State and Territory Hubs | Local Catalyst Support





## Program Summary

### 1. State/Territory Coordination

#### Hubs (Coordination Hubs):

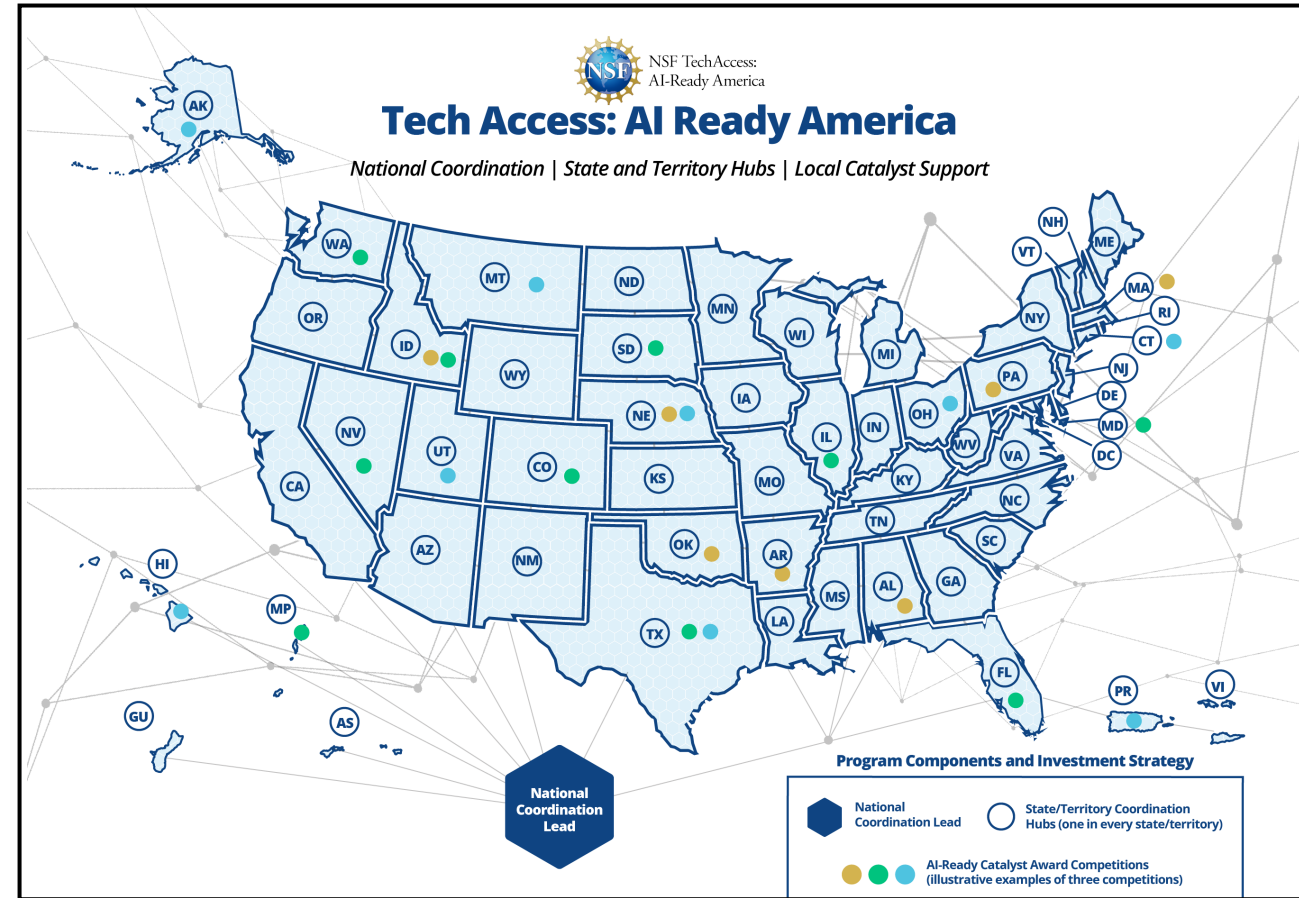
one in every state/territory of the United States connecting partners, strengthening planning and deployment, and rapidly scaling approaches.

### 2. **A National Coordination Lead (National**

**Lead):** facilitating collaboration and knowledge sharing among Coordination Hubs, coordinating priority economic sectors, and informing national AI strategies.

### 3. **AI-Ready Catalyst Award Competitions:**

a series of topic-driven competitions issued over the course of the program to pilot and scale innovative approaches that address critical national AI needs.



The released funding opportunity (NSF 26-508) is for the **Coordination Hubs**.

**Additional funding calls will be posted on the initiative page as they are released:**

<https://www.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/ai-ready>



## **State/Territory Coordination Hubs: Funding Information**

**Up to 56 awards** - one for every state, the District of Columbia, or territory in the U.S.

- **First cohort:** 10 awards with the remainder anticipated in future rounds.
- **Funding amount:** Each Coordination Hub Award will receive support of \$1M/year for three years, with the possibility for one additional year of support if the Coordination Hub can demonstrate a compelling need as it phases out or transitions to other sources of funding.
- **Funding Mechanism:** Standard Grant or Continuing Grant.



## State/Territory Coordination Hubs Funding Eligibility

### Who May Submit Proposals:

- Full information found in NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG), Chapter I.E.
  - **Eligible:** Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), Non-profit Non-academic Organizations, Tribal Nations
  - **May be eligible:** For-profit Organizations, State and Local Governments
  - **Not eligible:** Unaffiliated individuals, Foreign Organizations & Other Federal Agencies

**Who May Serve as Principal Investigator (PI):** There are no restrictions or limits.

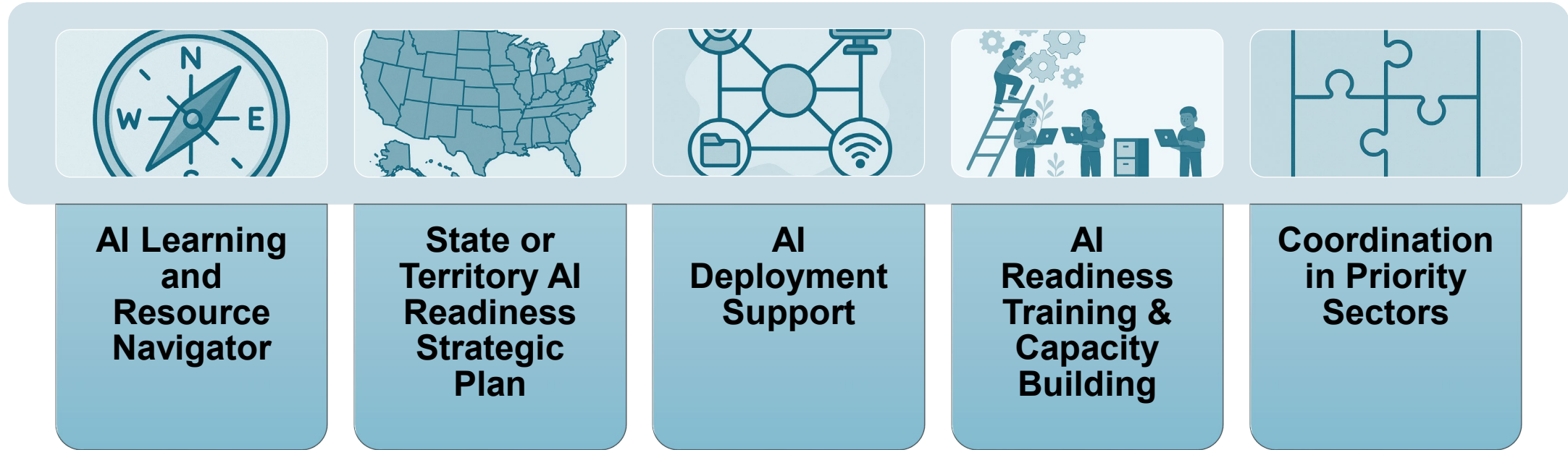
**Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or co-PI:** There are no restrictions or limits.

**Limit on Number of Proposals *per* Organization:** One (1)

- Coordination Hubs are limited to **one proposal per institution** as the **lead**.
- **Sub-awardees** may be on more than one proposal.

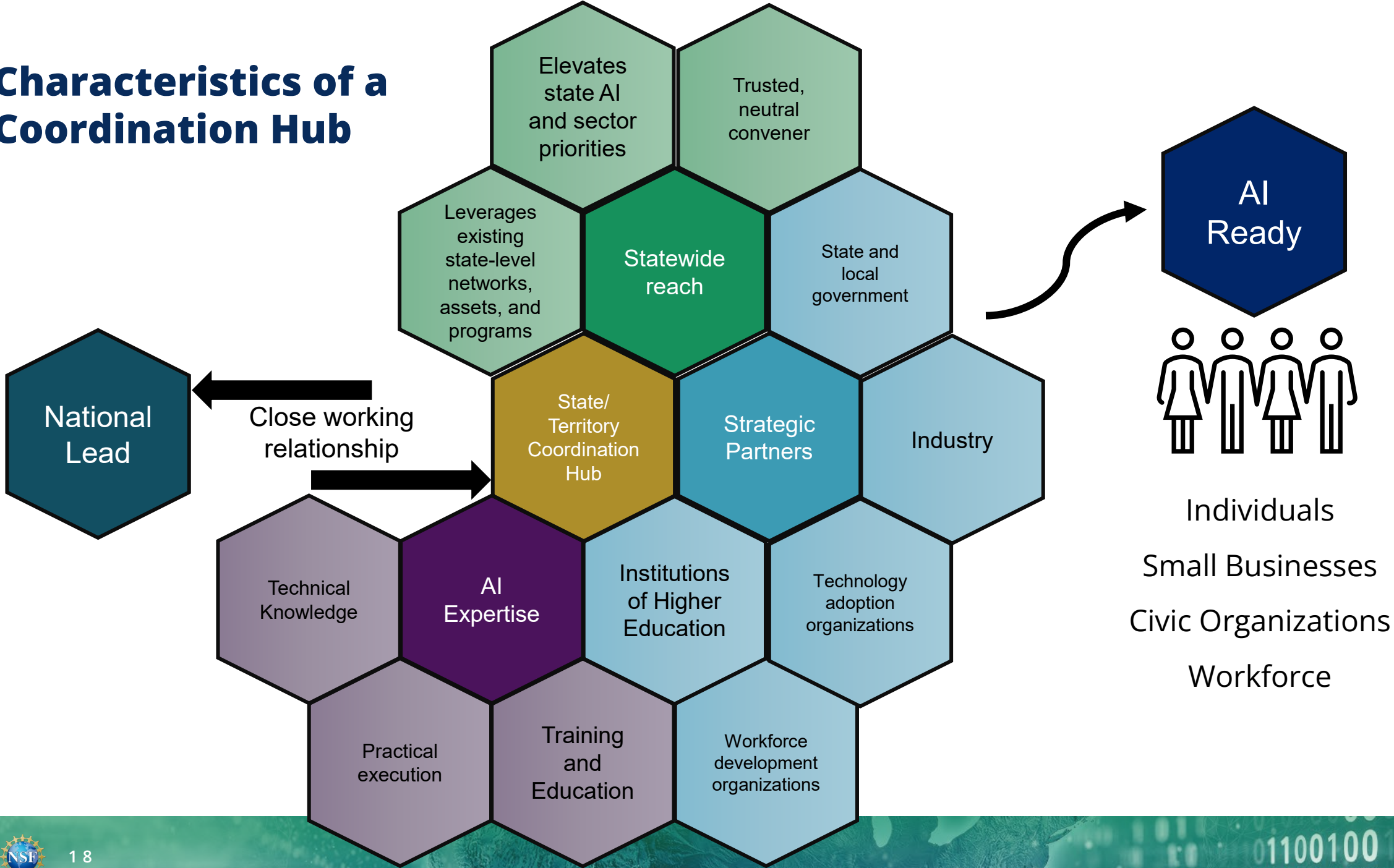


## State/Territory Coordination Hubs Responsibilities



Hubs serve as the center of state/territory-wide coordination to accelerate AI readiness and deployment, in coordination with the National Lead.

# Characteristics of a Coordination Hub



# Proposal Preparation and Review



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- **Proposals must follow the guidelines within the NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG) together with additional instructions and deviations noted in the program solicitation.**
  - Follow the most recent versions of the PAPPG.
- **Proposals must be submitted through [Research.gov](https://www.research.gov) or [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)**



## Proposal Preparation: Letters of Intent (required)

- **Due Date for round 1 proposals:**
  - June 16, 2026 (due by 5 p.m. submitting organization's local time)
- Must be submitted through Research.gov
- Letters of Intent **MUST** include the following:
  - **Title**
  - **Project Principal Investigator (PI), co-PIs, and Other Senior Project Personnel,**
  - **Participating Organizations,**
  - **Synopsis section** (limit: one page).
- The Letters of Intent will not be used as a pre-approval mechanism for the submission of proposals, and no feedback will be provided to submitters.



## Proposal Preparation: Project Description

- **Page Limit:** 15 pages
  - References do not count as part of the page limits.
- Project descriptions must include labeled Sections 1- 5 using the specified section headers:
  1. Vision and Approach to Responsibilities
  2. Organizational Background, Team Expertise, and Partnership Rationale
  3. Current State of AI Planning and Coordination
  4. Work Plan, Milestones, and Performance Metric
  5. Resource Mobilization and Leveraging Additional Support
- Additional content may be included as appropriate.



## Proposal Preparation: Budget

- Budget preparation guidelines can be found in [PAPPG Chapter II.D.2.f](#)
- Each proposal must contain a budget for each of the 3 years of support requested, up to \$1M/year.
- There also needs to be a budget justification that provides a more detailed breakdown of proposed spending in each category as well as a justification supporting the numbers provided in each budget category.
  - All budget justifications must be **no more than five pages** per proposal.
    - Each subaward must have a separate budget justification.
- **Program specific requirements:**
  - Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.
- A possible 4<sup>th</sup> year of support will be done through a supplemental request and should not be included in the budget.



## Proposal Preparation: Supplemental Materials

- Proposals may include only those supplemental materials permitted by the NSF Proposal & Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG Chapter II, D 2.i) and those explicitly required in this solicitation. For this program:
  - **Letters of Collaboration** are required from all partners identified in the proposal and should follow the format described in the PAPPG.
    - Letters of collaboration are required from all partners to confirm commitment
    - Letters of collaboration should be limited to stating the intent to collaborate and should not contain endorsements or evaluation of the proposed project.
  - **A Data Management Plan** must be included, consistent with PAPPG requirements. **Limit: 2 Pages.**
  - **A Mentoring Plan** must be included if the proposal requests funding for postdoctoral researchers or graduate students. **Limit: 1 page per plan.**
  - No letters of support or additional narrative materials are permitted.



## NSF Merit Review Criteria

Two criteria are given full consideration during the review and decision-making processes: Each criterion is necessary, but neither, by itself, is sufficient.

- **Intellectual Merit:** The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge.
- **Broader Impacts:** The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.



## **Solicitation Specific Review Criteria**

### **To what extent is it evident that the proposed State/Territory Coordination Hub:**

- Presents a **clear vision and approach for advancing statewide AI readiness** in alignment with program goals, national AI-readiness priorities, and responsibilities of the Coordination Hub.
- Has a lead organization and partners that demonstrate **statewide/territory-wide convening and coordination capacity**, along with the expertise needed to implement the responsibilities effectively.
- Reflects an understanding of current state/territory efforts in AI and related areas and offers **strategies to address gaps and accelerate progress**.
- Includes **realistic milestones, measurable outcomes, and mechanisms for evidence-based implementation** and scaling of efforts.
- Outlines credible strategies for **mobilizing additional resources to expand impact** beyond NSF funding.



## **NSF Review Process**

- Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation will be reviewed:
  1. For compliance with the solicitation guidelines (and NSF PAPPG); noncompliant proposals may be returned without review.
  2. By an NSF Program Officer and at least two external experts (panelists and possibly ad hoc reviewers).
- Proposal may additionally be reviewed through a virtual site visit.
- Partners listed under Participating Directorates and Agencies may participate in the proposal review process.
- Visit the *Overview of the NSF Proposal and Award Process* page for more information on the proposal review and selection process:  
<https://www.nsf.gov/funding/overview>



## Important Dates

### **Letter of Intent Due Dates (due by 5 p.m. submitting organization's local time):**

- June 16, 2026 (round 1)

### **Full Proposal Deadlines (due by 5 p.m. submitting organization's local time):**

- July 16, 2026 (round 1)

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



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## **FAQ Category: Timing on other funding calls for this program**

**(1) When will the competition for the National lead be announced?**

**(2) When will the announcement for the first AI-Ready Catalyst Awards Competition come?**

To stay up to date with all available news and updates on all program areas:

- Sign up for the TIP [listserv](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNSF/signup/32385):  
<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNSF/signup/32385>
- Monitor the initiative webpage for the [TechAccess: AI-Ready America](https://www.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/ai-ready):  
<https://www.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/ai-ready>



## FAQ Category: Proposal preparation instructions

### (3) Do the proposal preparation requirements deviate from other NSF proposals?

Yes, somewhat. Proposals must be prepared in accordance with the **NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)** with several noted exceptions:

- The **Project Description** must include the five labeled sections listed in the Proposal Preparation Instructions section of the solicitation.
- There is a **limit on the number of proposals** that may be submitted for the State/Territory Coordination Hub awards: **one proposal per institution.**
- In addition to NSF's standard merit review criteria, this solicitation includes **solicitation-specific review criteria.**
- Awards made under this solicitation will incorporate special award conditions, including a **requirement for State/Territory Coordination Hubs to work with the National Coordination Lead**, which will be selected through a separate funding call.



## **FAQ Category: Coordination Hub Team**

### **(4) Are there requirements on the minimum number of organizations and types that need to be part of a Coordination Hub proposal submission?**

No. Proposers, however, are encouraged to assemble multi-organization, multi-sector teams that will enable them to effectively execute the responsibilities of a Coordination Hub.

### **(5) Does NSF have a perspective on what type of organization makes the strongest lead?**

No. The program provides flexibility for Coordination Hubs to determine what organization is best suited for their state/territory. Keep in mind eligibility requirements outlined in the PAPPG. Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), Non-profit Non-academic Organizations, and Tribal Nations are **eligible**, for-profit Organizations, State and Local Governments **may be eligible**, and unaffiliated individuals, Foreign Organizations & Other Federal Agencies are **not eligible**.



## **FAQ Category: Coordination Hub Team**

### **(6) Can teams propose a multi-state Coordination Hub?**

No. The program aims to fund a separate Coordination Hub in every state/territory.

### **(7) Can you be the lead organization for more than one Coordination Hub?**

No. Eligibility criteria limits the number of Coordination Hub proposals per institution to one.

### **(8) Can you be a partner on more than one submission?**

Yes. Proposers, however, should carefully consider the structure of their proposed Coordination Hub.

### **(9) Will the NSF facilitate any partnership building events?**

Not at this time. However, we strongly encourage organizations within each state to come together and organize internally.



## **FAQ Category: Coordination Hub Focus**

### **(10) Can a Coordination Hub proposal focus on a particular topic area, i.e. AI + X?**

It is unlikely that focusing on a single topical area will make sense for a given state. Coordination Hubs should, however, be responsive to priorities of the state or territory and may choose to include partners who represent some or all of those priority topic areas.



## **FAQ Category: Getting involved as a proposal reviewer**

### **(11) How can I serve as a peer reviewer?**

- Calls for reviewers will be announced on the program initiative webpage for TechAccess: AI-Ready America: <https://www.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/ai-ready>.



## **FAQ Category: Program Success**

### **(12) What does success look like for this program?**

From NSF's perspective, success includes:

- Increasing national AI readiness across individuals, small businesses, civic organizations, and the workforce.
- Improving AI literacy, proficiency, and fluency across communities.
- Expanding access to AI training, resources, and deployment support.
- Strengthening coordination among education, workforce, industry, and public-sector partners.
- Demonstrating measurable outcomes such as the number of individuals trained and the number of small businesses and government entities assisted and hours or dollars saved through AI adoption.

What NSF is asking of proposers:

- Define what success in AI-readiness looks like for your state or territory.
- Include performance metrics in Section 4 of the proposal (work plan, milestones, and performance metrics).
- Contribute to defining national AI-readiness as part of the first cohort working with the National Lead.

# Second Webinar: April 23, 2026

**Topics:** Hear from the program's federal partners + more FAQs

**Registration link:**

[https://nsf.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN\\_4MUhIEsiTlmtgt31b\\_-aTQ#/registration](https://nsf.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_4MUhIEsiTlmtgt31b_-aTQ#/registration)

Submit questions in advance during registration or email [ai-ready@nsf.gov](mailto:ai-ready@nsf.gov)

We anticipate offering office hours soon after the second webinar



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## **Important Deadlines for round 1**

### **Coordination Hubs:**

**Letter of Intent: June 16, 2026**

**Full Proposal: July 16, 2026**

**(Due by 5 p.m. submitting organization's local time)**

Look for updates on the program's initiative webpage:

<https://www.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/ai-ready>



Join the TIP listserv to receive select updates:

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNSF/signup/32385>

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