



NSF EPSCoR

ADVANCING GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY IN STEM



EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement Program: EPSCoR Collaborations for Optimizing Research Ecosystems (E-CORE)

NSF 25-523

EPSCoR Live! Webinar

February 23, 2026

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NSF Program Officer

Overview

- E-CORE Program Framework
- Solicitation Goals and Key Elements
- Noteworthy Solicitation Updates
- Current Awardees
- Closing Remarks



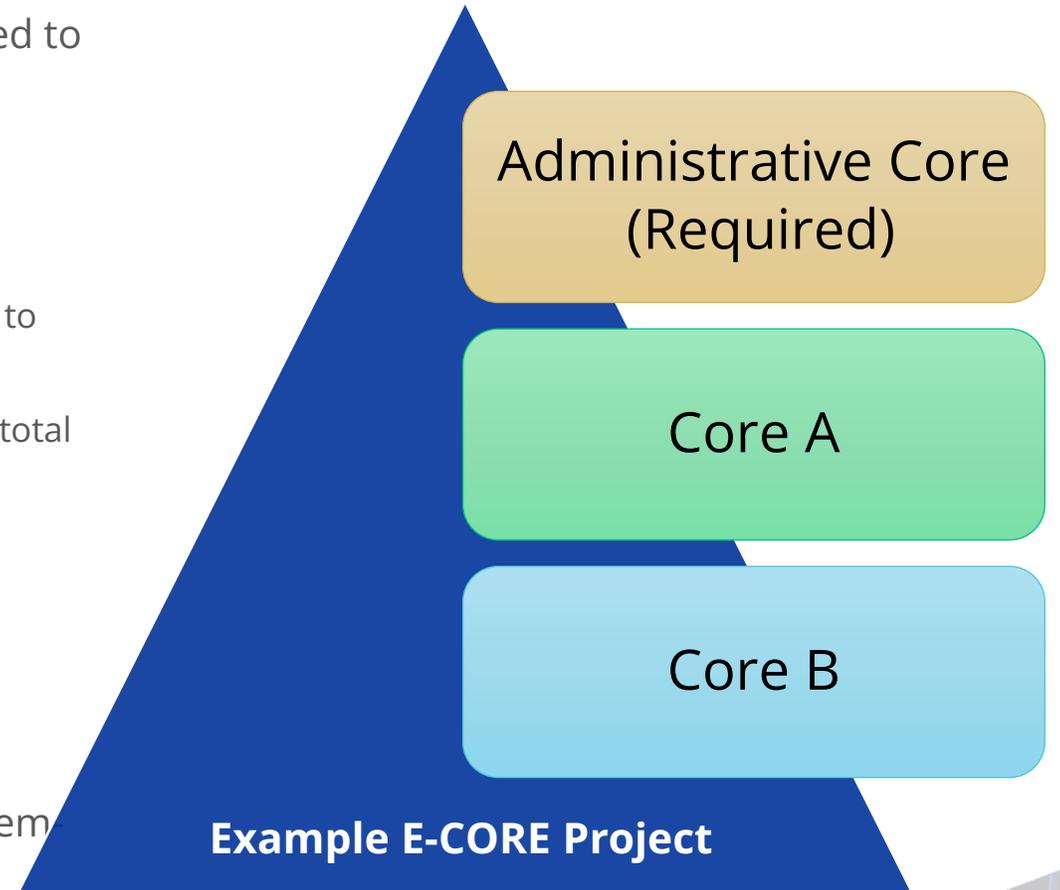
Critical Elements of Research Ecosystem

- A robust research ecosystem is an environment where research can thrive, leading to new discoveries, technological advancements, and solutions to complex problems.
- Every jurisdiction has unique challenges, needs and opportunities within its research ecosystem.



E-CORE Program Overview

- Solicitation **NSF 25-523**: E-CORE supports jurisdictions in building significant and sustainable research capacity and research infrastructure for targeted areas of focus, hereinafter referred to as “cores,” that underlie a jurisdiction's research ecosystem.
- **Administrative Core**: Required in addition to other cores
- **Budget Guidance**:
 - Cooperative agreement, multi-institutional, budget requests up to \$10 million for up to 4 years
 - Optional renewal project award maximum budget of \$8 million total + 20% in cost-share for an additional four years
 - NSF's contribution can be \$18 million over 8 years
- **Deadline**: July 21, 2026, by 5 PM submitting institution's local time.
- **Renewal Site Visit**: Year 3-4 for renewal project proposals
- **Sister Program**: E-RISE—Supports hypothesis-driven or problem driven research and workforce development to improve competitiveness in a selected STEM field



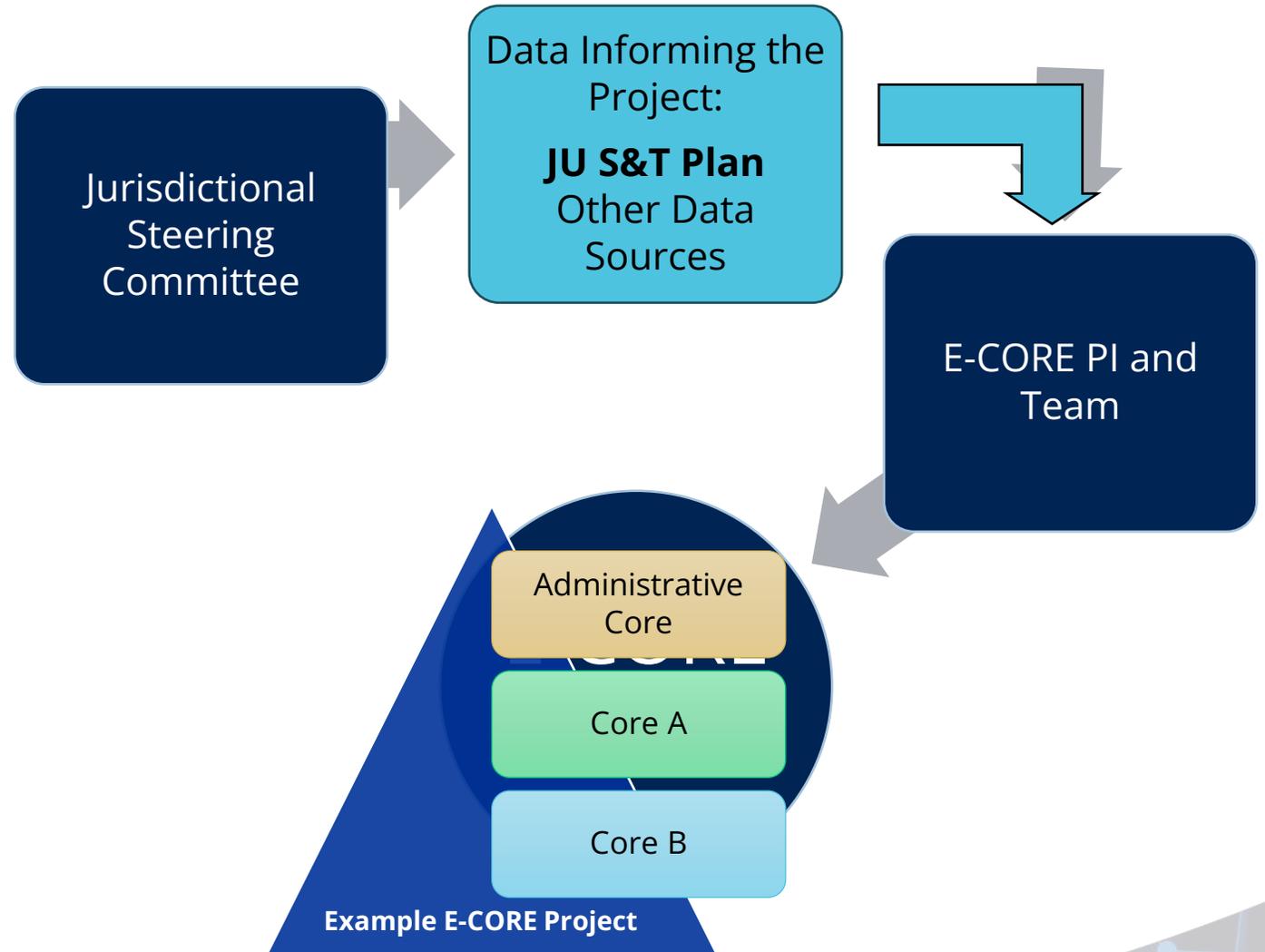
E-CORE Goals

1. Leverage the understanding of a jurisdiction's needs, challenges, and opportunities to build significant and sustainable research infrastructure within a jurisdiction's research ecosystem;
2. Build capacity to scale expertise that will support jurisdiction-wide partnerships and increase the likelihood of follow-on funding from non-EPSCoR sources; and
3. Develop sustainable pathways to broaden the participation of individuals and organizations that engage within a jurisdiction's research ecosystem.



An E-CORE Project Plugs Into A Research Ecosystem Through An Assessment

- Jurisdictional Science and Technology Plan (living document)
 - Typically obtained from the Jurisdictional Steering Committee
 - Shows strengths, needs and challenges in the jurisdiction-wide research ecosystem
 - Identifies priorities
 - Fundamental research infrastructure (addressed by E-CORE)
 - Opportunities to build research strength (addressed by E-RISE)
- Other Data sources are allowed to contribute to the assessment (ie. Surveys, etc...)



Activities of the Administrative Core

- Jurisdictional Development
- Research Ecosystem-Wide Connections
- Broadening Participation and Fostering a Culture of Reciprocal Collaboration
- Goals, Metrics, and Evaluation
- Intentional Communication

Administrative Core

The Administrative Core should coordinate with Jurisdictional State Office **and/or** transition office functions if desirable



E-CORE Structure: What Could a Project Look Like?

Needs, Challenges & Strengths Identified in the JU S&T Plan & Other Data Sources

Jurisdiction-Wide Assessment

Administrative

Research Facilities and Infrastructure

Economic Development and Use-Inspiration

Example E-CORE Project

Administrative (Required)

Research Support

Research Facilities and Infrastructure

Higher Ed. Pathways

STEM Edu (K-12)

Workforce Development

Broadening Participation

National and Global Partnerships

Community Engagement and Outreach

Economic Development and Use-Inspiration

Early Career Research Trainee Pathway

"Other" Core

Cores for Consideration*

*Keep project depth and budget constraints in mind when considering the number of cores



Project Description Structure Within an E-CORE Proposal

- State of the Jurisdiction and E-CORE vision
- Strategic Plan, Assessment and Evaluation
- Leadership, organization, and Management
- Results from Relevant Prior Support



Solicitation-Specific Merit Review Criteria

- Connection and potential impact of E-CORE to address both jurisdictional needs, jurisdiction-wide research capacity, and EPSCoR Mission and Goals.
- Support of broadening participation.
- Evidence that there is a culture of reciprocal collaboration and that there is mutually beneficial collaboration across different organization types and sectors.
- Plan for project management, leadership, and partnerships.



Noteworthy Solicitation Differences in NSF 25-523

Solicitation Updates

- Increased the total budget for the first four years from \$8M to \$10M
- Added requirement for leadership team to include a person responsible for coordinating networking and engagement across the jurisdiction and program management
- A requirement was added for notifying the Jurisdiction Steering Committee of an E-CORE proposal submission
- The requirement to allocate 5% of the budget to the Jurisdictional Steering Committee was removed.
- Stated NSF's expectation for the S&T plan to be publicly available
- Expanded limit to 10 letters of collaboration



What does an E-CORE Project Look Like In Real Life?

Jurisdiction	Title
<u>Maine</u>	E-CORE RII: Strengthening Maine's Research Ecosystem and Pathways Through Strategic Capacity Building
<u>Mississippi</u>	E-CORE RII: Mississippi Research Alliance
<u>New Hampshire</u>	E-CORE RII: New Hampshire Long-term Investment to Fuel Transformative Research (NH-LIFT)
<u>New Mexico</u>	E-CORE RII: Research Infrastructure Optimization for New Mexico
<u>South Dakota</u>	E-CORE RII: South Dakota Research Ecosystem Network: STEM Education, Community Engagement, and Broadening Participation
<u>Rhode Island</u>	E-CORE RII: Rhode Island Inclusive Network for Excellence in Science and Technology

Press Release: <https://new.nsf.gov/news/nsf-awards-38m-strengthen-research-infrastructure-build>



Real Life E-CORE Projects Cont.

Jurisdiction	Title
<u>Delaware</u>	E-CORE RII: Strengthening Partnerships for Advancing Research Capacity in Delaware
<u>Guam</u>	E-CORE RII: Optimizing Research Infrastructure in Guam
<u>Kentucky</u>	E-CORE RII: Technology for Innovative Visualization, Aggregation & Training in Environmental Preparedness and Resilience for Kentucky
<u>Louisiana</u>	E-CORE RII: Louisiana Networks of Excellence for Tomorrow
<u>Vermont</u>	E-CORE RII: The Science and Technology Research Initiative for the Vermont Economy
<u>Arkansas</u>	E-CORE RII: Arkansas Nexus for Excellence in Technology, Workforce, Outreach and Research Knowledge
<u>North Dakota</u>	E-CORE RII: Sustainable Programs Advancing Research and Knowledge across North Dakota

Press Release: <https://new.nsf.gov/news/nsf-invests-40m-strengthen-stem-research-capacity-workforce>



To be successful, projects must:

- Be focused on the **jurisdiction as a whole**, irrespective of scientific foci (or show a trajectory towards that over the potential 8 years of the award)
- **Build networks**, or networks of networks to bring folks together
- **Look within the jurisdiction** at the challenges and opportunities to building fundamental research infrastructure and capacity
- **Focus in on several key areas** (depth vs. breadth) to **create scalable impact (i.e. impact beyond individual teams or institutions)**
- Remember that these are designed to develop over eight years, you see the **first four, so you are really looking at potential**



For more information, stay in touch!

- Full Proposal Deadline: **July 21, 2026**
 - Due third Tuesday in July Thereafter
- Points of Contact:
 - E-CORE Team: EPSCoR-CORE@nsf.gov

Office Hour Dates

(Select a date to register):

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Thursday, April 16, 2026

Thursday, May 7, 2026

Wednesday, May 27, 2026

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

Thursday, July 9, 2026





Thank You!

Time for Q&A

E-CORE and E-RISE are aimed at different levels to help develop a jurisdictional research ecosystem

E-CORE: Development of networks, and fundamental research infrastructure irrespective of a given scientific field

E-RISE: Jurisdiction-based research infrastructure in specific scientific fields

Workforce Development
Economic Development
High Need Schools
Workforce Development
Professional Development
Rural Communities
Research Facilities



Sound Generation

Quantum Computing

Advanced Manufacturing

Human Factors

Vehicular Safety

Post-Quantum Cryptography