



NSF EPSCoR

ADVANCING GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY IN STEM



EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII): EPSCoR Research Fellows

—An Opportunity for Early and Mid-Career Investigators

Informational Webinar

January 25, 2024



Webinar Overview

- The US NSF EPSCoR Program
- The EPSCoR Research Fellows Funding Opportunity
- Proposal Best Practices and Requirements
- Merit Review Criteria
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Closing Remarks





EPSCoR Research Fellows: Key Information

- Funding opportunity that supports PI's from EPSCoR-eligible institutions in the development of research collaborations.
- Solicitation Number: NSF 24-528; up to \$300,000 for up to 2 years
- Deadline: April 22, 2024, by 5 PM submitting institution's local time.
- Please use the links below to access the solicitation and resources to assist with proposal preparation:
- –Solicitation: <https://beta.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/epscor-research-infrastructure-improvement-track-4-0>
- This pre-recorded webinar presentation: https://new.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/epscor/epscor-office-hours?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery



NSF EPSCoR: Building Jurisdiction-wide Research Capacity



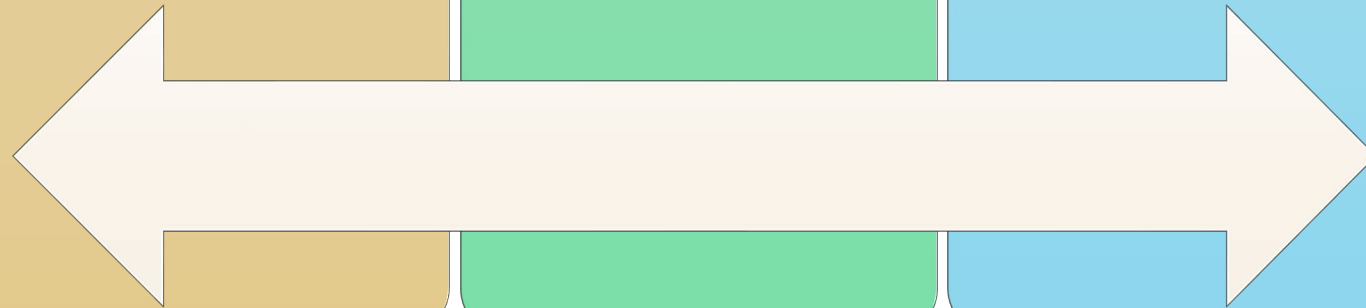
Discovery & Innovation



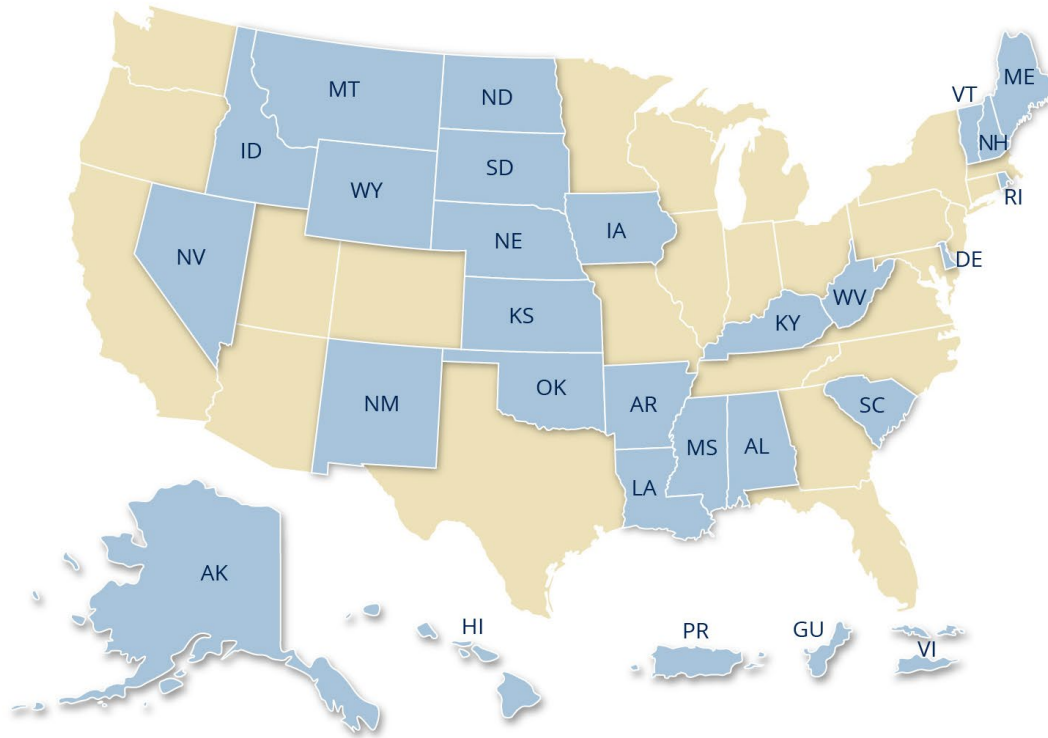
Education & Workforce



Economic Development



NSF EPSCoR Eligibility



AL	Alabama
AK	Alaska
AR	Arkansas
DE	Delaware
GU	Guam
HI	Hawaii
IA	Iowa
ID	Idaho
KS	Kansas
KY	Kentucky
LA	Louisiana
ME	Maine
MS	Mississippi
MY	Montana
NE	Nebraska
NH	New Hampshire
NM	New Mexico
ND	North Dakota
NV	Nevada
OK	Oklahoma
PR	Puerto Rico
RI	Rhode Island
SC	South Carolina
SD	South Dakota
VI	U.S. Virgin Islands
VT	Vermont
WV	West Virginia
WY	Wyoming

- States, Commonwealths, and Territories are eligible for funding if their most recent 5-year level of total NSF funding is equal to or less than 0.75% of the total NSF budget.
- Eligibility table updated annually and publicly available:

https://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/programs/epscor/nsf_oia_epscor_eligible.jsp





EPSCoR Research Fellows EPSCoR Research Fellows Opportunity

- Provides opportunities for **non-tenured** (or equivalent) early- and **tenured** investigators to further develop their individual research potential through extended visits to the nation's premier **private, federal, or academic institutions**.
- Fellows will be able to:
 - learn new techniques
 - benefit from access to state-of-the-art equipment and facilities
 - strengthen collaborative partnerships
 - extend their research toward transformative directions
- Experiences gained through fellowships are intended to provide:
 - Time to develop new or extend current research directions
 - A pathway to strengthen research connections with partners nationwide
 - benefits that will impact the recipient's career in years to come
- Fellowship outcomes are also expected to in turn enhance the research capacities of their **home institutions and/or jurisdictions**.





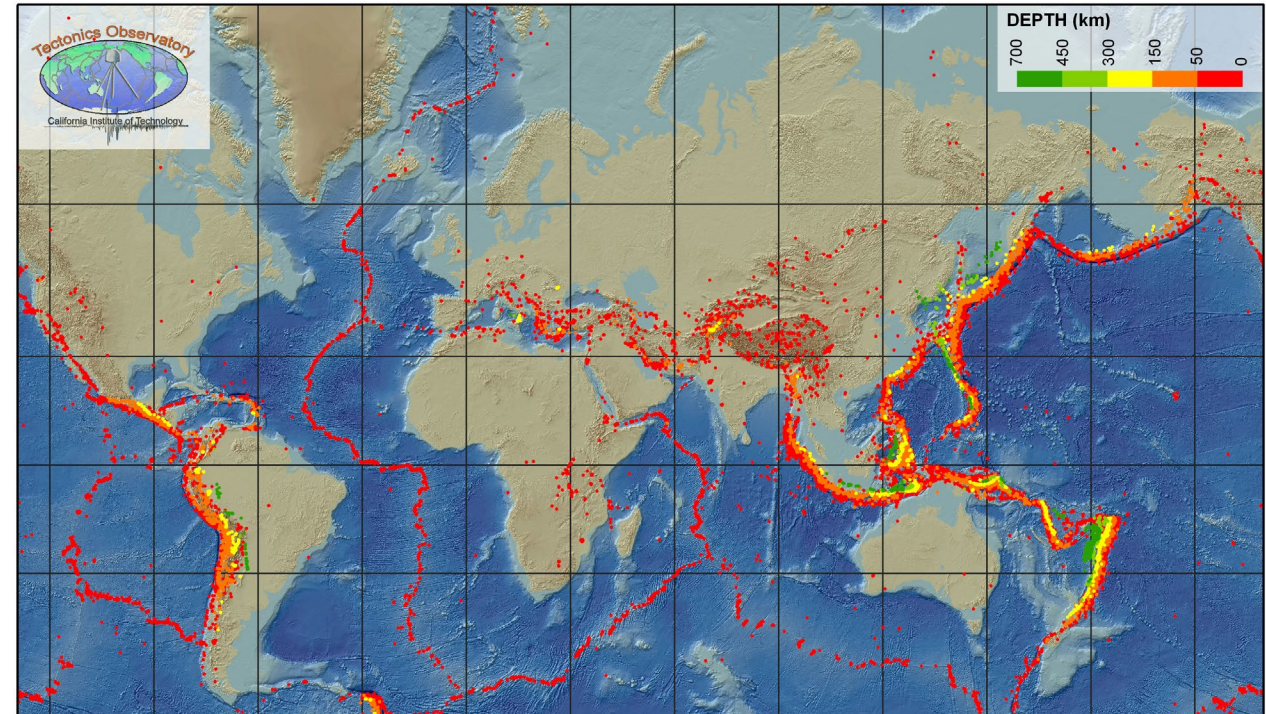
What's Notable In The Most Recent Solicitation?

- The name of the Funding opportunity is renamed "EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII): EPSCoR Research Fellows."
- The RII Track-4: NSF and RII Track-4:@NASA has been renamed to EPSCoR Research Fellows:NSF and EPSCoR Research Fellows:@NASA.
- PI Eligibility is clarified to include only non-tenured and tenured Assistant and Associate professor ranks (or equivalent ranks).
- Language was added to clarify fellowship duration, activities at the primary host site, and allowable activities at a secondary host site.
- The number of allowable proposals per institution is four for both sub-tracks.



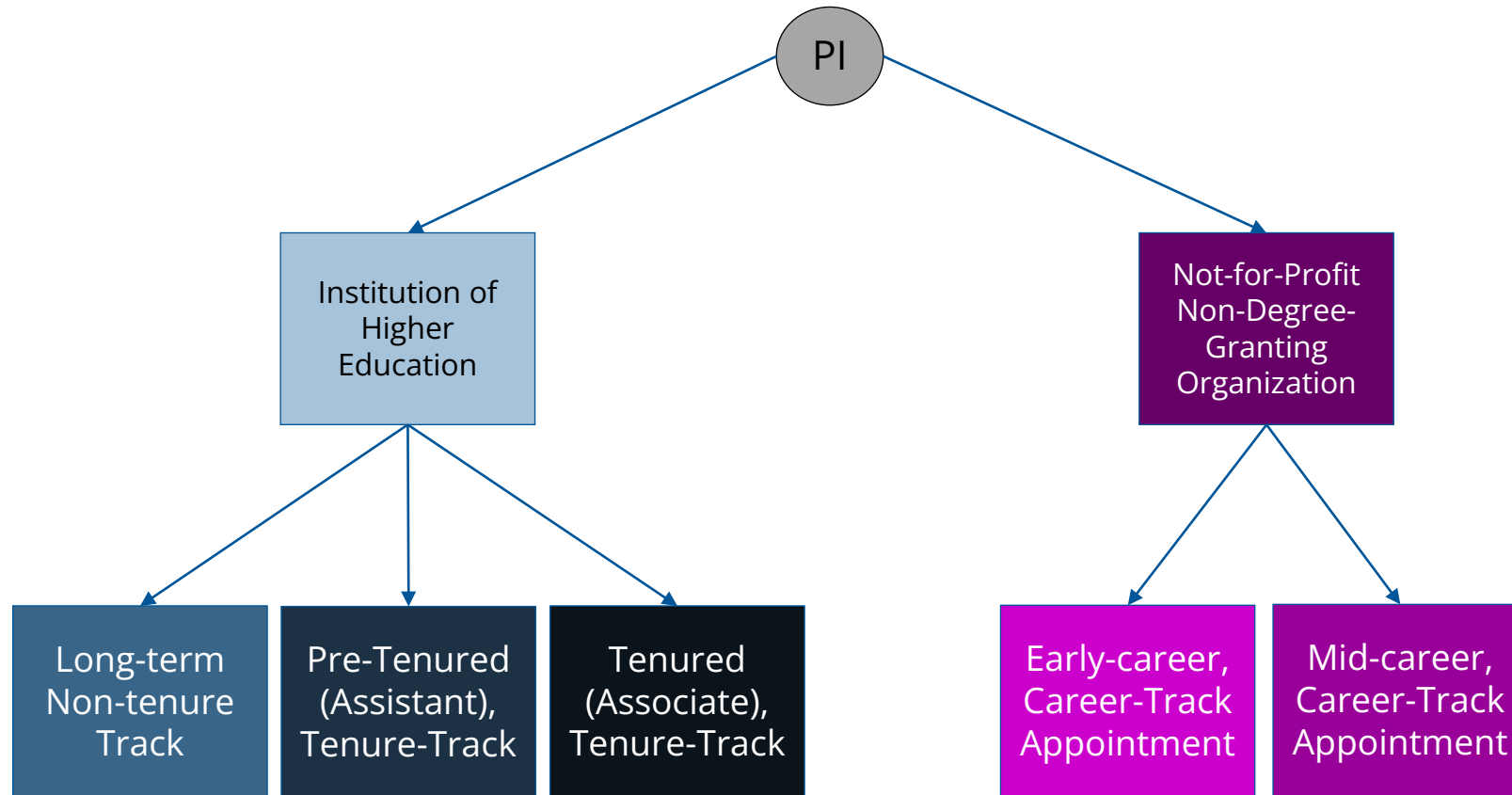
EPSCoR Research Fellows Tracks

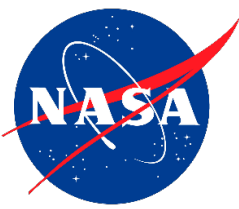
- EPSCoR Research Fellows: NSF, host sites may be **any** research institution within the United States or its territories/possessions.
 - Generally expected to be beyond easy commuting distance from the home institution.
 - Any topic that NSF funds is eligible



Global Map of Earthquakes Credit: Lisa Christiansen, Caltech Tectonics Observatory

EPSCoR Research Fellows Eligibility





EPSCoR Research Fellows: @NASA

- EPSCoR Research Fellows: @NASA is a collaboration between the NASA and NSF EPSCoR programs.
- Host sites are selected NASA Research Centers.
- Specific topics are eligible based on the NASA Research Center (links to these topics are available in the solicitation).
- Specific Institution types are eligible
 - Research Focus Areas: <https://www.nasa.gov/learning-resources/established-program-to-stimulate-competitive-research/epscor-research-infrastructure-improvement-rii-track-4/>

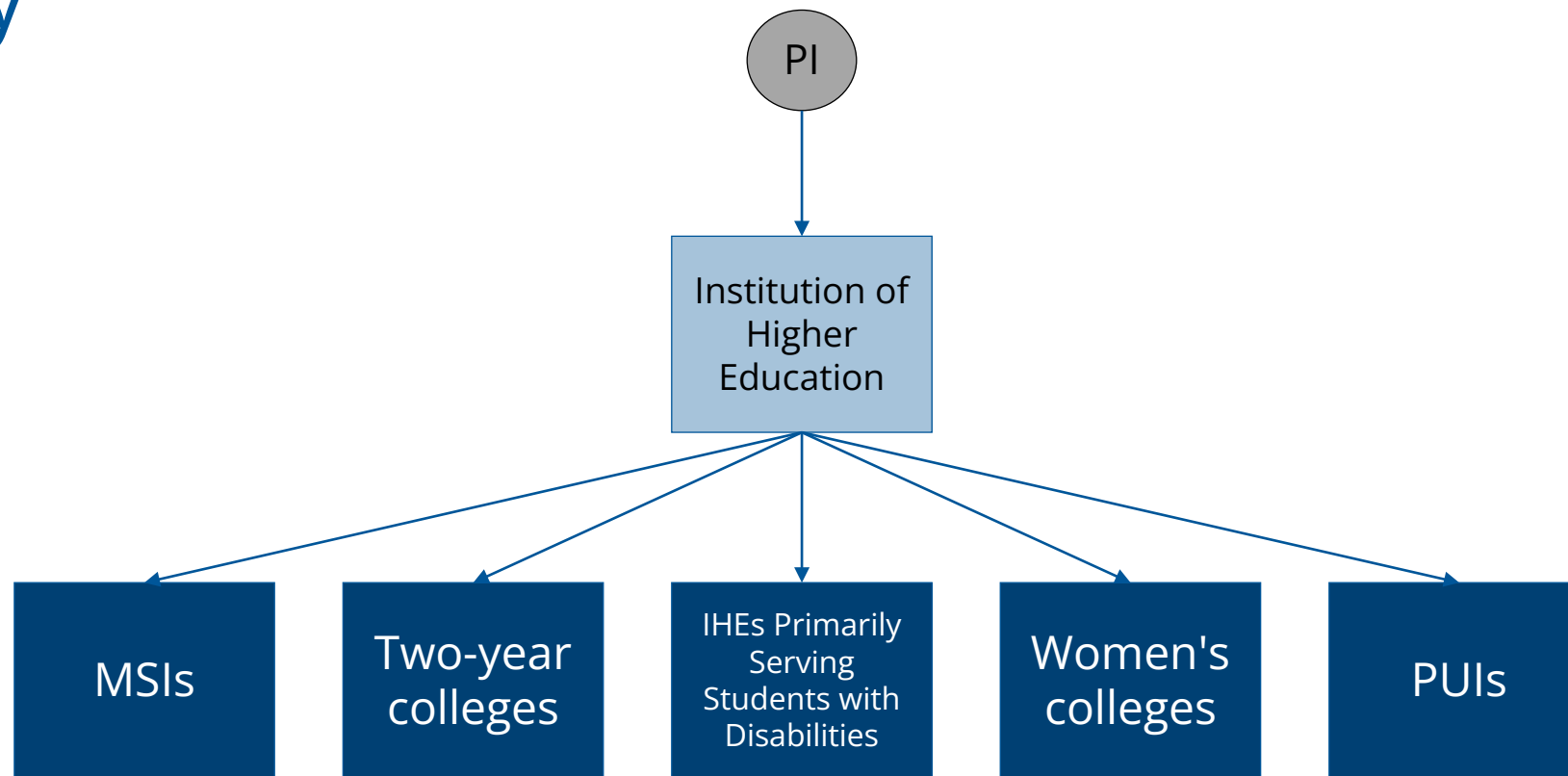
EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) Track-4: EPSCoR Research Fellows

The Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) is designed to fulfill the mandate of the National Science Foundation (NSF) to promote scientific progress nationwide. EPSCoR jurisdictions that are eligible for Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) competitions are listed in the RII Eligibility table, which can be found here. Through this program, NSF establishes partnerships with government, higher education, and industry that are designed to effect sustainable improvements in a jurisdiction's research infrastructure, Research and Development (R&D) capacity, and hence, its R&D competitiveness.

EPSCoR RII Track-4: EPSCoR Research Fellows directly aligns with NSF EPSCoR strategic goal of establishing sustainable Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) professional development pathways that advance workforce development in STEM and effects engagement in STEM at national and global levels. EPSCoR RII Track-4: EPSCoR Research Fellows provides awards to build research capacity in institutions and transform the career trajectories of investigators and further develop their individual research potential through collaborations with investigators from the nation's premier private, governmental, or academic research centers. The fellowship provides opportunities to establish strong collaborations through extended or periodic collaborative visits to a selected host site. Through collaborative research activities with the host site, Fellows will be able to learn new techniques, develop new collaborations, advance existing



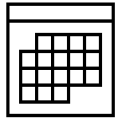
Additional EPSCoR Research Fellows:@NASA Eligibility



EPSCoR Research Fellows:@NASA Funding Information



Planning to fund up to 10 proposals



Access to NASA facilities starting as early as Q1 2025



Teams can visit NASA facilities for 4-24 weeks during the two-year timeline



The NASA research collaborator also serves as mentor to the PI and Technical Monitor for the project; will provide site visits and annual reports.



U.S. citizenship is required for research opportunities at specified NASA Centers. Lawful permanent residents are eligible for research opportunities at specified NASA Centers.





EPSCoR Research Fellows:@NASA: Finding A NASA Collaborator

- To initiate the match, complete a survey to express your interest: [Survey Link](#)
- Once a matching research topic is identified, the NASA EPSCoR coordinator will facilitate research discussions and collaborations with a NASA collaborator.
- For questions, please contact frank.mcdonald@nasa.gov
- In some cases, PIs may have prior research collaboration with NASA Scientists/Engineers, this information should be shared with the EPSCoR coordinator to proceed with possible match.
- The PI is required to include a letter from the NASA EPSCoR coordinator, in the proposal package.
- For additional information, including NASA's research interests, go to: (<https://www.nasa.gov/learning-resources/established-program-to-stimulate-competitive-research/epscor-research-infrastructure-improvement-rii-track-4/>)





What Goes in the Proposal?

- Successful EPSCoR Research Fellows proposals will present exciting, vibrant fellowship ideas that will positively impact and potentially **transform** the PI's individual career trajectory and more broadly impact his/her research field, institution, and jurisdiction.
- All proposals should include:
 - Motivation and research context for the work to be conducted;
 - Well Defined, reasoned, and organized research objectives which could be driven by specific research questions or hypotheses
 - PI's specific plans for the fellowship period; and
 - Discussion for how the **benefits** gained from the fellowship would be **sustained beyond the award**;
 - Clear specifications of fellowship **goals, performance metrics, and a timetable**;
- Explain how/why the EPSCoR Research Fellows award **will advance the PI's research program** – what specific opportunities will be made possible via the PI's extended visit(s) to the host site?
 - The parameters for the partnership should be **clearly established**.
- Describe how the activities will lead to long-lasting impacts for both the PI's career **and the home institution and /or jurisdiction.**





EPSCoR Research Fellows: Budget Request Overview

- For both sub tracks, NSF budget requests may be up to \$300,000 over a duration of 24 months.
 - 1 to 6 months of salary support for the PI and one trainee-level participant
 - It is expected that the PI will complete a minimum of a one month extended visit to the host institution, or an equivalent of several periodic visits totaling one month.
- Up to \$10,000 may be requested for the host collaborator for travel related to the fellowship project which includes visits to the PI's home site and/or participation in conferences where the collaborative work is presented.
- For EPSCoR Research Fellows:@NASA, an additional \$60K Research Infrastructure Development (RID) grant from NASA for research infrastructure at home institution is available.
 - Please do not include this request in budget requests to NSF.





Required Letters

Please provide all letters as supplementary documents

1. From the appropriate supervisory administrator at the PI's home institution.
 - Should confirm the institution's support of the PI's plans and particularly should verify that the PI will receive **release time** from other academic duties to complete the project as proposed.
 - Should also **confirm the PI's employment status** at the home institution as it pertains to eligibility for the EPSCoR Research Fellows competition.
2. For EPSCoR Research Fellows:NSF, a letter from the identified primary research collaborator(s) at the host site.
 - Should confirm the **collaborator's understanding** of the goals of the fellowship and provide **evidence** to demonstrate that the PI will receive the support necessary to complete the proposed activities.





Required Letters (cont.)

3. A letter must be provided from an appropriate administrative manager at the host institution.
 - Should confirm that all **necessary logistical arrangements** (site access, office space, cyber connectivity) to ensure that the project can proceed as proposed.
 - In the rare cases where the PI believes the primary research collaborator at the host site is also the appropriate administrative manager, the PI should contact a program officer from NSF EPSCoR for guidance.
 - For EPSCoR Research Fellows:@NASA, this letter will be provided through the NASA EPSCoR Coordinator.

Additional Letters from other parties may be submitted only if they are needed to verify **specific tangible commitments** related to activities described in the proposal. PIs will be required to remove letters that do not meet this standard.





Required Letters (cont.)

Additional Letters **only** For EPSCoR Research Fellows:@NASA:

4. Primarily Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs)

- For this category, a fourth letter, from an Authorized Organizational Representative, certifying that the originating and managing institution is an accredited college or university
 - that awards Associates degrees, Bachelor's degrees, and/or Master's degrees in NSF-supported fields,
 - and has awarded 20 or fewer PhD/DSci degrees in all NSF-supported fields during the combined previous two academic years





Merit Review Criteria

All NSF proposals are evaluated through use of two National Science Board approved merit review criteria.

- Intellectual Merit—the potential to advance knowledge
- Broader Impacts—the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

—From NSF PAPPG 23-1 Ch.III.A.2





Merit Review Criteria cont.

For each of these criteria, the following elements are considered as part of the merit review process:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to:
 - a. Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
 - b. Benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?
2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
3. Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?
4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?
5. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

—From NSF PAPPG 23-1 Ch.III.A.2





Merit Review Criteria cont.

■ Solicitation-Specific Criteria:

- What evidence is presented to demonstrate that the proposed research outcomes can be achieved within the constraints of the fellowship period, **with the work being performed primarily at the host site?**
- How will the fellowship have a **transformative** impact on the trajectory of the PI's research career both during the period of the award and beyond?
- How will the fellowship yield tangible benefits to the home institution and/or jurisdiction **beyond** the individual benefits to the PI?
- What evidence is there that the home institution and the host site are **each committing** the **necessary resources**, both scientific and administrative, to lend confidence that the fellowship project will be **successful in achieving its intended outcomes?**





Frequently Asked Questions

- Can I apply if my eligibility will change after the solicitation deadline?
- If this is a fellowship, how might I discuss my research and my hypotheses?
- Can I travel to more than one host site?
- If I specify an NSF directorate and division in the project summary, will my proposal go to that part of NSF?
- I submitted a proposal to this year's competition can I serve as a reviewer?
- Can I go to a NASA research center for the EPSCoR Research Fellows: NSF sub-track?





Contact information

■ National Science Foundation:

- Chinonye Nnakwe Whitley, NSF, telephone: (703) 292-8458, email: cwhitley@nsf.gov
- Pinhas Ben-Tzvi, NSF, telephone: (703) 292-8246, email: pbentzvi@nsf.gov
- Lisa Cliggett, NSF, telephone: (703) 292-2759, email: lcligget@nsf.gov
- Hongmei Luo, NSF, telephone: (703) 292-8867, email: hluo@nsf.gov

■ National Aeronautics and Space Administration:

- Kathy Loftin, NASA, email: Agency-EPSCoR-RII-Track-4@mail.nasa.gov
- Frank McDonald, NASA, email: frank.mcdonald@nasa.gov





EPSCoR Research Fellows Outreach

- PIs are encouraged to attend the outreach events for questions regarding this opportunity.
- Office hours at 3:00 PM ET on the dates below:
 - Thursday, February 8, 2024
 - Thursday, February 29, 2024
 - Thursday, March 21, 2024
 - Thursday, April 11, 2024
- You can register here: https://nsf.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_b-kN-NOLT8mLqF8JUG_2dw
- Submit questions in advance to cwhitley@nsf.gov
- While real time captioning will be available, requests for additional accommodations may be sent to cwhitley@nsf.gov 14 days in advance.





In Summary

Steps to a successful application:

1. Consult with your sponsored research office regarding internal competitions
2. Identify a collaborator at a host site or NASA Center*
* For EPSCoR Research Fellows:@NASA: Review the research focus areas to find alignment with available opportunities and contact the NASA EPSCoR Agency Coordinator
3. Write the proposal narrative and obtain letter(s) of support early
4. Contact NSF and NASA POC regarding questions
5. Submit your proposal through Research.gov **well before** the deadline of April 22, 2024

If you are interested in reviewing for this opportunity, please send your CV to an NSF POC and you will be asked to complete a reviewer survey in advance of the deadline.





Thank for Listening!

Time for Q & A . . .

