Informational Session on **NSF 24-573**: EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement – Focused EPSCoR Collaborations Program (RII FEC) and **NSF 24-091**: Dear Colleague Letter for Announcement of Topic FY 2026 RII FEC Competitions

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Webinar Outline

- RII-FEC general Information

- Overview of FEC Solicitation

- Overview on Use-Inspired Research

- Merit Review Criteria

- Q&A

RII-FEC looks to:

- Build inter-jurisdictional <mark>collaborative</mark> teams of EPSCoR investigators in areas aligned with NSF (see DCL NSF 24-091).

- Drive discovery and <mark>build sustainable STEM capacity</mark> that exemplifies institutional, geographic, and disciplinary diversity.

- Broaden participation through the strategic inclusion and integration of all individuals, institutions, and sectors in the Jurisdictions.

- Develop <mark>early-career faculty</mark> to sustain and advanc e research capacity, or equivalent (ex , Junior Researcher)

RII-FEC General Information:

To maximize the impact of funds, RII-FEC must:

- Add significantly to the research capacity of the participating jurisdictions in the focus area (see DCL for focus area);

- Contribute to the advancement of research and innovation;

- Illustrate how the participating jurisdictions' research capacities will be positively impacted by the collaborative effort; and

- Outline clear plans for the recruitment and/or development of talent in STEM such as early-career faculty.

Also, requests for RII-FEC funding must:

- Engage the full diversity of the participating jurisdictions' resources, including higher education institutions, local and state organizations, and industries;

- Include social and economic expertise to understand and assess the societal implications of the focus area, as detailed in the Dear Colleague Letter (DCL); and

- Present a sustainability plan for obtaining subsequent, sustained non-EPSCoR funding from federal, jurisdictional, or private sector sources.

Important Information for NSF 24-573

- Only jurisdictions that meet the EPSCoR eligibility criteria may submit proposals to the RII-FEC competition. ✓

  - Non-EPSCoR and international collaborations may be included, but no EPSCoR funds should be directed to these organizations.
  - Subawards to organizations in non-EPSCoR jurisdictions are not allowed.

- Proposals may be submitted either as (i) simultaneous submission of FEC proposals from multiple organizations, under one project (one lead + collaborators) or (ii) a proposal from one organization with support from collaborating organizations requested as subawards. ✓

- An organization may only submit one proposal to the RII-FEC competition as lead. However, an organization may serve as a non-lead in a collaborative submission, or as a subawardee, on any number of additional proposals. ✓

Important Information for NSF 24-573

- For proposals from one organization with subawards, each submission must have at least one Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-PI from each of the different participating EPSCoR jurisdictions. ✓

- An investigator may serve as PI or Co-PI on only one RII-FEC award / submission at any given time. However, the investigator may serve as other Senior/Key Personnel on any number of RII-FEC submissions or awards. ✓

- The focus area for the RII-FEC program is announced via a Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) found at this link: EPSCoR Program links.

Clarifications

Principal Investigator (PI): The single contact person for all communication with the NSF regarding the project's technical, scientific, and budgetary aspects.

Co-Principal Investigators (co-PIs): You can list up to four co-PIs on the proposal cover sheet.

- As a **single FEC proposal** (with subwards), there is one PI and up to four Co-PIs.

- By simultaneous submission of FEC proposals from different organizations, one PI and up to four Co-PIs are allowed per submission.

Other Senior Personnel: For projects involving more than five senior researchers (one PI and four co-PIs), additional team members should be listed as "Other Senior Personnel." There is no limit on the number of additional senior personnel you can name.

- Up to five Letters of Collaboration are allowed overall.

Focused EPSCoR Collaborations (FEC)   —

[Dear Colleague Letter](#)
Announcement of Topic for the Fiscal Y[ear]
Infrastructure-Focused EPSCoR Collabo[rations]

The RII-FEC program (formerly known as "[F...]
collaborative teams of EPSCoR investigato[rs...]
Mathematics (STEM) focus areas consisten[t...]
Strategic Plan. Projects are investigator-dr[iven...]
EPSCoR eligible jurisdictions with complem[...]
challenges, which neither party could addr[...]
projects have a comprehensive and integr[...]
STEM capacity that exemplifies individual, [...]
projects' STEM research and education act[...]
strategic inclusion and integration of all in[...]
EPSCoR recognizes that the development [...]
traditionally underrepresented in STEM fie[lds...]
capacity. The integration and inclusion of [...]
Primarily Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs[...]
sustainable STEM capacity.

Letter of Intent

Letter of Intent due date(s)(required)(due by [...]

Due Date

Full Proposal due date(s)(due by 5 p.m. subm[...]

EPSCoR Interagency Coordinating

Dear Colleague Letter

Announcement of Topic for the Fiscal Year 2025 and 2026 EPSCoR Research Improvement Infrastructure-Focused EPSCoR Collaborations (RII-FEC) Program

May 21, 2024

Encourages the submission of proposals from EPSCoR interjurisdictional teams who have historically conducted foundational research to extend their work by pursuing related, use-inspired research questions in any STEM area that NSF supports.

Dear Colleagues:

The Focused EPSCoR Collaborations (FEC) program (NSF 24-573) is an EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) program within the Research Capacity and Competitiveness (RCC) Section of the Office of Integrative Activities. A primary driver of the RII-FEC program is the need to build STEM-driven, interjurisdictional research collaborations with the potential to be nationally and internationally competitive in focus areas consistent with U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) priority program investments and high-priority national challenges (National Science Foundation 2022-2026 Strategic Plan).

With the enactment of the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, national key critical and emerging technologies, NSF's key technology focus areas, and the establishment of the NSF Directorate for Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships (TIP), NSF EPSCoR recognizes that entry into the use-inspired space from foundational research requires significant partnerships and infrastructure that

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NSF 24-091: Dear Colleague Letter
Announcement of New Topic for FY 2025 and 2026 Competitions

"Building capacity towards use-inspired research"

Flexibility in disciplinary focus , as no technical topic is required.

FEC accepts proposals in any areas supported by NSF.

Does the agency plan to focus its funding only on areas of artificial intelligence, quantum information science, biotechnology, and translational science?

While NSF will continue to focus on Administration priorities, such as artificial intelligence, quantum information science, biotechnology, and translational science, we remain committed to awarding grants and funding all areas of science and engineering to promote the progress of science, advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare, and secure the national defense.

NSF Directorate for Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships (TIP) Glossary

Use-inspired research: Research that is driven by the potential use of the knowledge it generates. (https://www.nsf.gov/tip/glossary)

Use-inspired research: Driven by both the desire to advance fundamental understanding and the need to address real-world challenges. Such research often connects theoretical advances with practical applications, ensuring scientific and engineering discoveries are not just intellectually satisfying but also useful in solving challenging problems – leading to innovations that directly improve the quality of daily life. (NSF 25-540: National Science Foundation Translation to Practice (NSF TTP))
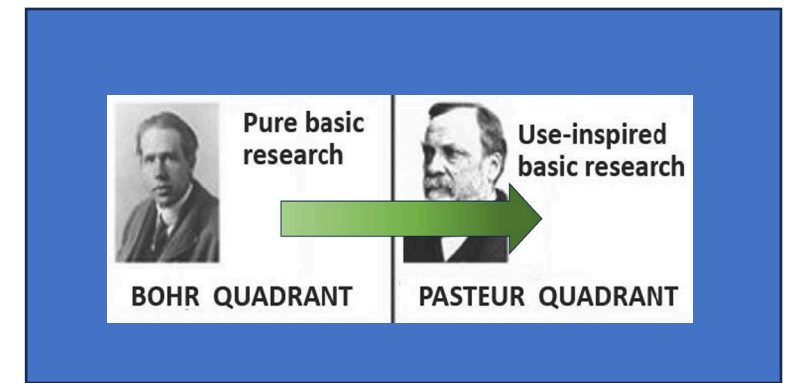
Why use-inspired research?

- Through a wide range of programs, NSF has historically invested in fundamental research in all fields of science and engineering, delivering foundational and use-inspired outcomes for seven decades.

- At this moment, NSF is amplifying its historic support for fundamental science and engineering with a particular focus on use-inspired research to develop critical technologies inspired by pressing national, societal, and economic challenges (TIP under the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022).

- The NSF's focus on translational science (one of the priority areas) is centered around "use-inspired research" that bridges the gap between basic scientific discovery and real-world application. Translational Science is listed as one of the current NSF's priorities.

- RII FEC provides the opportunity for EPSCoR jurisdictions to move along their research spectrum, by creating the capability to expand their research ecosystem by integrating use-inspired research and enhancing their competitiveness.

- NSF Regional Innovation Engines (NSF Engines) | NSF 24-565

- Centers of Research Excellence in Science and Technology (CREST Centers) in Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Research | NSF 23-158

- Gen-4 Engineering Research Centers (ERC) | NSF 24-576

- Science and Technology Centers: Integrative Partnerships | NSF 22-521

Existing NSF programs led by other directorates focus on use-inspired, solution-oriented research in key technology areas.

NSF Search of Current Funding Opportunities:
- 27 – "use-inspired"
- 211 – "societal Impact"

NSF 2025 FEC Awards:

Optical properties of mineral dust aerosols: Building capacity for use-inspired applications through experimental and theoretical investigations — This project aims to quantify global and regional mineral dust cycles and their impacts on weather and climate and on human and natural systems.

Good fire: Enhance spatial and temporal efficacy of prescribed fire and managed wildland fire use — By integrating advanced machine learning with ecosystem models, this project will provide novel, decision-support tools for optimizing managed fires to efficiently and effectively meet management objectives and prevent ecological disruption across diverse landscapes.

Circular waste resource recovery and water reuse systems to drive sustainability and resiliency of the Great Plains rural communities —The project focuses on building research capacity to create a circular resource recovery platform with water reuse, generating valuable co-products, substances that result from a production process, from livestock waste.

Tri-state collaborative for defluorination of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances — This project will synergize expertise in materials, separation, reaction, electrochemistry, process systems, modeling, and social science to address environmental and public health concerns and technical challenges posed by low concentrations of PFAS in water and their resistance to defluorination reaction.

Harnessing artificial magnetic semiconductors in the flatland — The design of next-generation 2D magnets will offer new quantum states and applications, and will deliver devices with unique functionalities ranging from lithium-ion batteries, flexible electronics, wearable devices, sensors, and functional membranes.

Establishing infrastructure for AI-driven discovery of small molecules to combat antibiotic resistance, biofilms, and aflatoxin contamination — Their research aims to develop novel antimicrobial agents to kill bacteria, anti-biofilm strategies to reduce biofouling, and small-molecule inhibitors to neutralize aflatoxin in crops.

Is my project use-inspired? (Guide for reference Swiss National Science Foundation, not NSF Criteria)

- **Aim**: produce scientific insights and solve practical problems;

- **Cognitive/Conceptual**: is primarily concerned with basic science, it might help to resolve practical problems or issues;

- **Source of the research question**: was defined by scientists in collaboration with a user/practitioner community;

- **Implementation**: the project has the potential to be implemented in the near future;

- **Types of output**: produce academic and non-academic publications;

- **Target audience**: the results will be made accessible to the public outside academia;

- **People involved**: the research team is composed of scientists and practitioners;

If several of the above-mentioned criteria are met, the project is likely to be use-inspired.

REF: https://www.snf.ch/media/en/oNV3aq4DikuO6vhK/SNSF_UIBR_Final_Report_by_Technopolis_May2017.pdf

# Summarizing, To be successful, projects must:

- **Have solid Intellectual Merit**

- **Have a clear focus on Broader Impacts**
  - seeks to create a significant and collective impact on targeted jurisdictions by advancing towards use-inspired research addressing practical problems.

- **Have a clear focus on Social Perspectives**
  - It is expected that projects include components that address understanding and assessing any specific societal impacts of the research.
  - The development of innovative educational plans to prepare a skilled technical workforce, at all levels.

- **Retain a focus on developing early career faculty**

- **Have a plan for sustainability beyond the award period**

Additional Solicitation Specific Review Criteria

- **Research Capacity** – What is the potential impact of the project on enhancing STEM research competitiveness and developing STEM research capacity and infrastructure in the jurisdictions (including physical, cyber, and human resources)?

- **Workforce Development** – How will the recruitment and development of early-career faculty and postdoctoral, graduate, and undergraduate trainees contribute to the preparation of a new cadre of skilled researchers, innovators, and educators able to work across boundaries and interface with stakeholders in areas associated with the project focus?

- **Inter-jurisdictional Collaboration** – Is there a balanced, sustainable, collaborative effort of activities such that each jurisdiction is contributing to and benefiting from the project at an appropriate level?

- **Integration of Project Elements** – How well developed is the integration of, and synergy between, the research, education, workforce development, sustainability, project coordination, and evaluation elements of the project?

NSF Proposal and Award Lifecycle
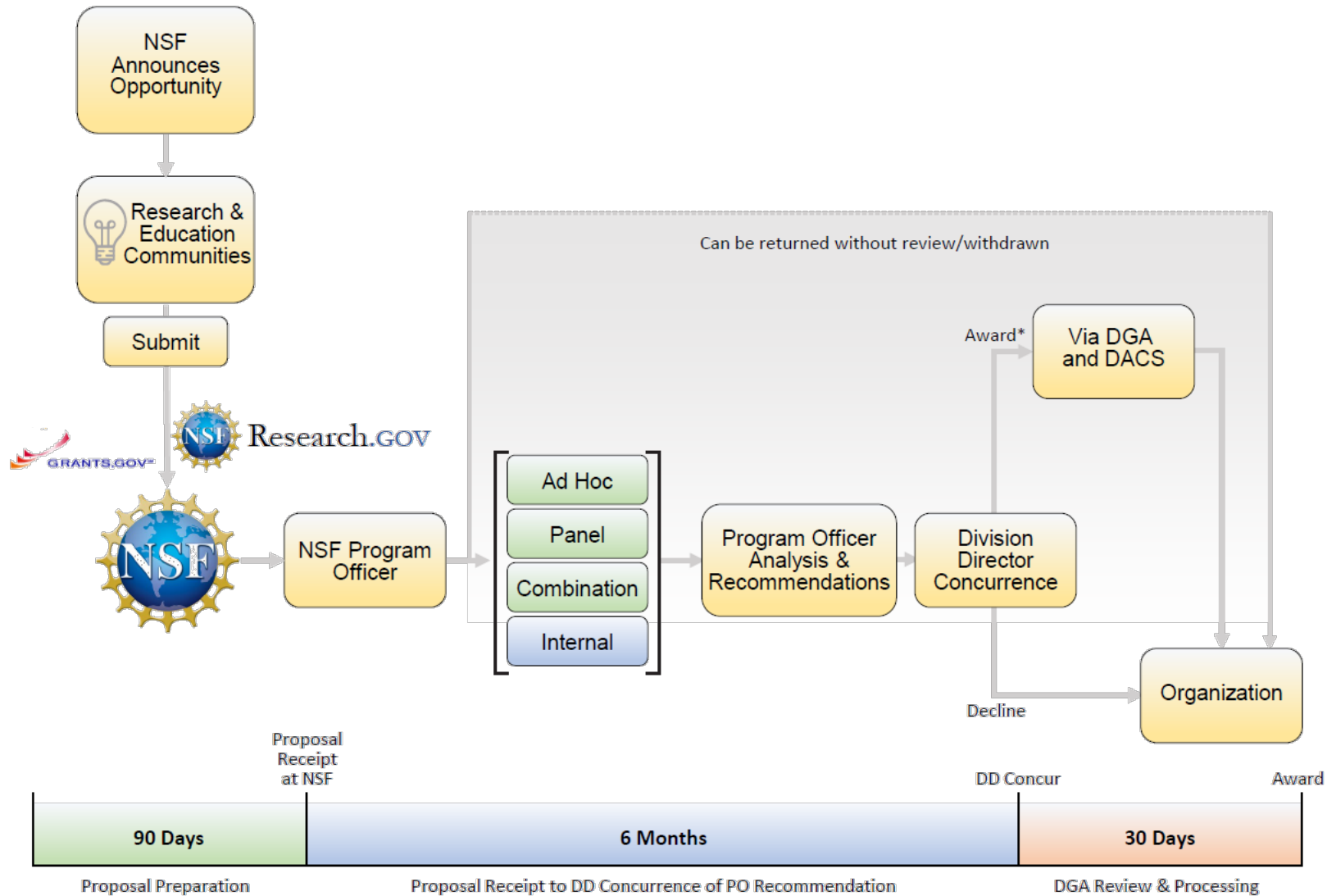
Key Dates

Letter of Intent

December 16, 2025

Third Tuesday in December

Final Proposal

January 27, 2026

Fourth Tuesday in January

Office Hour Dates & Times:

Oct 9, 2025 03:00 PM EDT

https://nsf.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/XOT5YxmYTHeXU5lWiG-cOg

Nov 12, 2025 03:00 PM EST

https://nsf.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/8yth9ZX3Q_2upNtYZPPeXQ

Dec 11, 2025 10:00 AM EST

https://nsf.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/n-rmAO57QNKcmR9muayEkQ

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Thanks for your attention!