



U.S. National
Science Foundation

Merit Review Process

Fiscal Year 2024 Digest

September 2026

About Evaluation and Assessment Capability

The [Evaluation and Assessment Capability \(EAC\)](#) Unit bolsters the U.S. National Science Foundation's (NSF) efforts to make informed decisions and promote a culture of evidence. EAC provides centralized technical support, tools, and resources to conduct evidence-building activities and to build capacity for evidence generation and use across the agency.

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About This Report

The *U.S. National Science Foundation's Merit Review Process: FY 2024 Digest* (Merit Review Digest) provides statistical information on proposals awarded and declined in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 based on a snapshot of NSF's transactional databases taken on October 1, 2024.^{1, 2} The description of the merit review process reflects those processes in place during FY 2024. The purpose of the Merit Review Digest is to provide summary annual statistics that characterize the annual merit review work of NSF and the individuals and organizations submitting proposals and receiving awards. It makes no conclusions or recommendations about NSF's merit review policies, processes, or outcomes. The statistical information included is relevant to agency leadership and stakeholders in the science and engineering (S&E) enterprise.

Data in this report are organized into the following sections:

- Competitive Proposals and Awards: overall proposal and award trends, EAGER and RAPID proposal and award trends, methods of proposal review, time to decision, and characteristics of principal investigators (PIs) and institutions
- Characteristics of Research Awards: overall proposal and award trends, award size and duration, PI funding rate and career stage, and people supported on research awards

¹ NSF also publishes statistical and funding information through an interactive dashboard, *NSF by the Numbers* (<https://new.nsf.gov/about/about-nsf-by-the-numbers>). *NSF by the Numbers* is updated periodically, so small differences between the dashboard and the Merit Review Digest may exist due to data corrections or changes made after the Merit Review Digest snapshot was produced.

² The directorates and offices referenced in this report reflect the NSF organization structure in FY 2024.

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1. Introduction

The National Science Foundation Act of 1950 (Public Law 81-507) directs the Foundation "to initiate and support basic scientific research and programs to strengthen scientific research potential and science education programs at all levels." The U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) is the only U.S. federal agency whose mission is to invest in fundamental, basic research and education across the full spectrum of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines (except for medical sciences). NSF achieves its unique mission by making merit-based awards to around 1,900 colleges, universities, businesses, informal science organizations and other research organizations throughout the U.S.

NSF Organization

NSF is divided into directorates and offices that support science and engineering research and education. In FY 2024, NSF had the following directorates: Biological Sciences (BIO); Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE); Engineering (ENG); Geosciences (GEO); Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS); Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE); STEM Education (EDU);³ and Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (TIP). The NSF Office of the Director (OD) also supports research and researchers.

Distribution of Awards

NSF funds projects primarily using grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts awarded through a competitive proposal evaluation process referred to as the merit review process. Most NSF projects support or stimulate scientific and engineering research and education and are funded using grants or cooperative agreements. A grant may be funded as either a standard or continuing award. Standard grants are given full funding for the duration of the project, generally 1-5 years, when NSF makes the initial award. Continuing grants receive funding incrementally (usually annually), subject to NSF's judgment of satisfactory progress, availability of funds, and receipt and approval of required annual and final project reports. The use of standard and continuing grants allows NSF flexibility in balancing current and future obligations. Cooperative agreements are used when the project requires substantial agency involvement during the project performance period (e.g., research centers and multiuser facilities). Contracts, which are excluded from the Merit Review Digest, are most often used to acquire products, services, and studies (e.g., program evaluations) required for NSF or other government use.

Merit Review Process⁴

Organizations submit proposals for new projects to NSF, which are then evaluated using two National Science Board (NSB)-approved criteria: Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts.⁵ The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses a project's potential to advance knowledge; the

³ In FY 2022, the Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR) was renamed the Directorate for STEM Education (EDU). EHR proposal and award statistics presented for fiscal years prior to FY 2022 are referenced under EDU.

⁴ The merit review processes described in this report reflect those in place during FY 2024.

⁵ For more information, see <https://www.nsf.gov/funding/merit-review>.

Broader Impacts criterion encompasses a project's potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes. Proposal solicitations may contain additional NSF-specified review criteria particular to the goals and objectives of the program.

As subject matter experts in programmatic and technical areas, NSF program officers lead the merit review of proposals and recommend which projects should be funded by NSF. The merit review process also relies on external experts to help evaluate proposals against the merit review criteria. Reviewers provide written reviews that describe the strengths and weaknesses of the proposals they evaluate when judged against the merit review criteria.

NSF programs obtain the input of external reviewers using three principal methods: (1) "ad hoc-only" review, (2) "panel-only" review, and (3) "ad hoc + panel" review. In the "ad hoc-only" review method, reviewers are asked to submit their written reviews to NSF. "Panel-only" reviews are solicited from panelists who convene in person or virtually to discuss their reviews and provide advice to the program officer as a group. Many proposals submitted to NSF are reviewed using a combination of these two processes, the "ad hoc + panel" review, to ensure appropriate rigorous review by a variety of experts.

NSF policy also allows internal review for some types of proposals, including proposals for EArly-Concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER), Rapid Response Research (RAPID), Research Advanced by Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering (RAISE), planning, and small proposals for travel and conferences.⁶ EAGER is a type of proposal used to support exploratory work in its early stages on untested, but potentially transformative, research ideas or approaches. RAPID is a type of proposal used when there is a severe urgency regarding availability of, or access to, data, facilities, or specialized equipment, including quick-response research on natural or anthropogenic disasters and similar unanticipated events. RAISE is a type of proposal used for interdisciplinary projects whose scientific advances lie outside the scope of a single program or discipline, promise transformational advances, and whose prospective discoveries reside at the interfaces of disciplinary boundaries.

Reviewer input is one of several factors NSF program officers consider when making funding recommendations to award or decline proposals. Since NSF receives more highly rated proposals than can be funded each year, program officers strive to build a portfolio of awarded projects that invests in diverse ideas, funds a mix of experienced and early-career researchers, supports research across the entirety of the nation, builds research capacity at institutions that have historically received less federal research funding, or achieves other agency and federal priorities. If the funding recommendation is to award the proposal, further processing takes place by a grants officer before an award is issued by NSF. Large awards may receive additional levels of review, up to and including review by the NSB.

⁶ Tables 2 and 3 present EAGER and RAPID proposals, awards, and funding rates from FY 2015 to FY 2024. In FY 2024, NSF received 45 RAISE proposals, which are either flagged in the administrative data with a special code or have proposal titles that begin with "RAISE."

2. Year in Review

In FY 2024, NSF received \$8.6 billion in its annual congressional appropriation to fund the agency's programmatic activities.⁷ This represents a decrease of \$841 million from FY 2023 appropriations.⁸ The agency's *FY 2024 Agency Financial Report* includes more details on how NSF used the funding to promote the progress of science; advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and secure national defense.⁹

Summary Merit Review Statistics

During FY 2024, NSF evaluated 40,453 competitive proposals and awarded 10,590 new competitive awards for an overall funding rate of 26%.¹⁰ This was a 4% decrease (466 proposals) in awards and a 3 percentage point decrease in the funding rate compared with FY 2023. As shown in Figure 1, the overall funding rate generally increased from FY 2015 to FY 2024. (See Section 3.A for more information on competitive proposals and awards.)

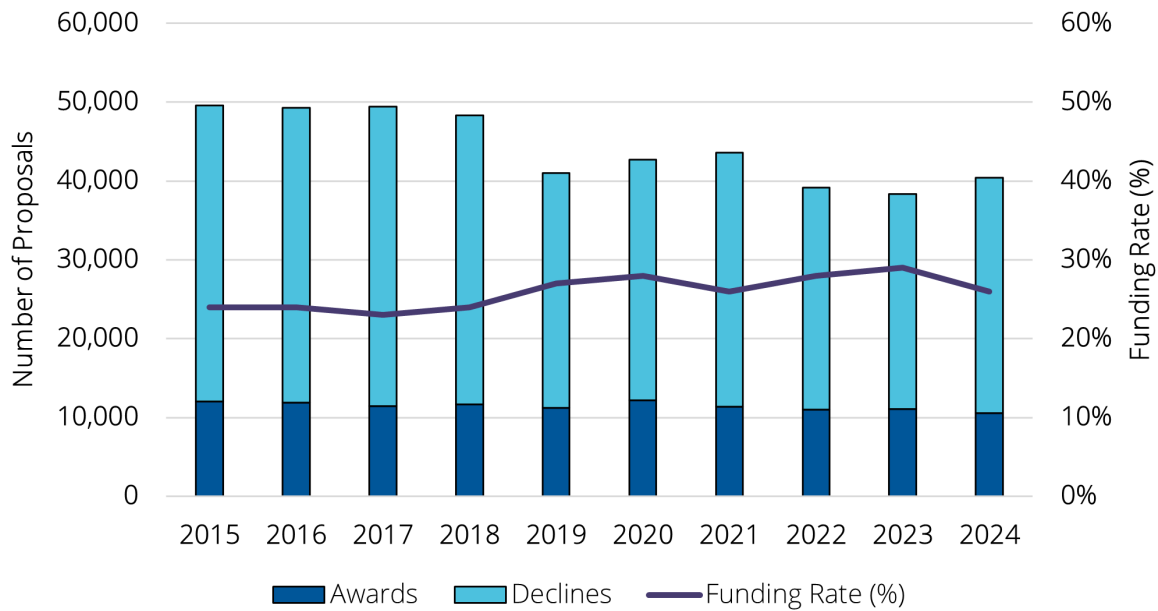
⁷ NSF's total appropriation was \$9.1 billion. Programmatic activities are funded from three appropriations accounts: Research and Related Activities, STEM Education, and Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction. The total funding appropriated to these accounts was \$8.6 billion, accounting for 95 percent of NSF's total appropriations. <https://nsf.gov-resources.nsf.gov/pubs/2025/nsf25002/pdf/nsf25002.pdf>

⁸ FY 2024 appropriations do not include \$25 million from the Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act of 2022, while the FY 2023 appropriations did include \$25 million from the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022.

⁹ <https://nsf.gov-resources.nsf.gov/pubs/2025/nsf25002/pdf/nsf25002.pdf>

¹⁰ Interactive dashboards with statistical and funding information are also available through NSF by the Numbers (<https://new.nsf.gov/about/about-nsf-by-the-numbers>). Slight differences in the data may exist due to the timing of when the data for the Merit Review Digest were exported for analysis, but these do not change the overall observations.

Figure 1 – Overall Award, Decline, and Funding Rate Trends

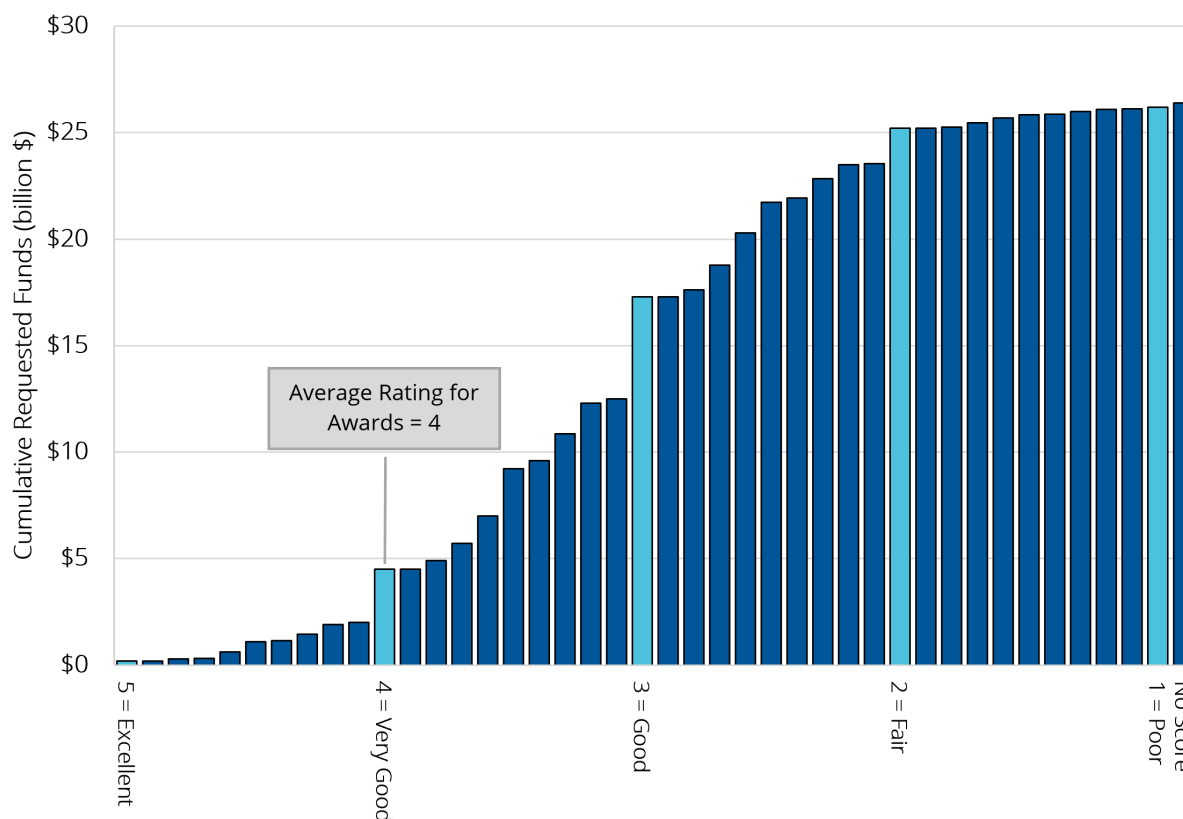


Source: Table 1 - Overall Proposals, Awards, and Funding Rate

Many potentially fundable proposals are declined each year. Reviewers assign a rating of Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, or Poor to submitted proposals; for quantitative analysis, these ratings are mapped to 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The average rating for all awarded proposals was 4.0 out of 5.0; \$4.5 billion was requested by PIs for the more than 4,500 declined proposals that received ratings of 4.0 or higher, and \$193 million was requested for the 244 proposals that were given an Excellent rating (i.e., a rating of 5) but were not funded (see Figure 2).¹¹

¹¹ Input received from reviewers is used by NSF, along with other factors, to make a funding decision. When NSF is developing a portfolio of funded projects, it may consider additional factors such as funding diverse ideas, making awards to experienced and early-career researchers, supporting research across the entirety of the nation, building research capacity at institutions that have historically received less federal research funding, or achieving other agency and federal priorities.

Figure 2 – FY 2024 Cumulative Requested Amounts for Declined Proposals by Average Reviewer Rating



Source: NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024.

In FY 2024, 83% of competitive proposals were research proposals. The remaining 17% were for centers and facilities projects, equipment, instrumentation, conferences and symposia, the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program, and education and training. The funding rate for research proposals was 24%—2 percentage points lower than the funding rate for all competitive proposals (see Tables 1 and 11).

The funding rate for PIs submitting research proposals across the last three years (which is the average duration for a research grant) was 42%. That is, among all PIs who submitted one or more research proposals between FY 2022 and FY 2024, 42% received an award in that period. The PI funding rate increased consistently between the FY 2013-2015 and FY 2020-2022 time periods before a decrease of 2 percentage points between the FY 2020-2022 and FY 2022-2024 time periods. See Table 15 for more information about PI funding ratings.

NSF reimburses organizations for the direct and indirect costs of conducting the project, including salaries and other expenses associated with senior personnel (e.g., PIs and co-PIs), postdoctoral researchers, students, and technical staff working on the project. In FY 2024, the mean annualized amount awarded per research grant was about \$209,000 (see Table 12). Proposal budgets for research awards funded by NSF in FY 2024 requested budget support for

an estimated 44,600 senior personnel, 3,600 postdoctoral researchers, and 25,600 graduate students (see Table 17).^{12, 13}

3. Data Tables

A. Competitive Proposals and Awards

Competitive proposals include full proposals for new projects, renewals, and accomplishment-based renewals, as well as interagency agreements that are externally reviewed. Concept outlines, preliminary proposals, contracts, Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) agreements, continuing grant increments, supplemental funding requests, Graduate Research Fellowship applications, and similar categories are not included. “Funding rate” refers to the proportion of evaluated proposals in a fiscal year that were awarded. For example, if a directorate processed 8,000 proposals during the fiscal year and awarded 2,000 of those proposals, the funding rate for that directorate for that year would be 25%.

Overall Proposals, Awards, and Funding Rates

Table 1 Series – Overall Proposals, Awards, and Funding Rates by Directorate

NSF

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	49,620	49,285	49,415	48,321	41,024	42,723	43,606	39,140	38,340	40,453
Awards	12,007	11,877	11,447	11,702	11,243	12,168	11,344	10,969	11,056	10,590
Funding Rate	24%	24%	23%	24%	27%	28%	26%	28%	29%	26%

BIO

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	5,119	5,206	5,005	4,765	3,110	3,783	3,959	4,234	4,206	4,257
Awards	1,379	1,330	1,142	1,190	1,046	1,369	1,174	1,130	1,012	942
Funding Rate	27%	26%	23%	25%	34%	36%	30%	27%	24%	22%

CISE

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	8,032	8,299	8,722	9,150	8,616	7,932	7,247	6,473	6,401	6,512
Awards	1,886	1,918	1,819	2,098	2,009	1,971	1,739	1,787	1,847	1,580
Funding Rate	23%	23%	21%	23%	23%	25%	24%	28%	29%	24%

¹² These estimates exclude direct support provided through other award categories, such as individual postdoctoral fellowships, NSF Graduate Research Fellowship awards, and other individual awards to graduate students.

¹³ Personnel estimates are based on budgeted amounts in the original proposals and not actual expenditures.

EDU

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	4,242	4,423	4,294	4,160	3,781	4,337	4,550	3,986	3,641	4,356
Awards	830	915	899	892	842	996	925	954	968	1,042
Funding Rate	20%	21%	21%	21%	22%	23%	20%	24%	27%	24%

ENG

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	12,326	12,570	13,028	13,092	9,024	9,181	11,325	6,486	6,007	6,103
Awards	2,504	2,499	2,455	2,458	2,379	2,406	2,283	1,577	1,504	1,458
Funding Rate	20%	20%	19%	19%	26%	26%	20%	24%	25%	24%

GEO

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	5,812	4,999	4,793	3,775	4,099	3,721	3,702	3,296	2,951	3,242
Awards	1,463	1,526	1,520	1,407	1,534	1,552	1,673	1,367	1,308	1,244
Funding Rate	25%	31%	32%	37%	37%	42%	45%	41%	44%	38%

MPS

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	9,133	9,199	8,848	8,803	8,045	8,612	8,114	7,192	7,581	7,828
Awards	2,593	2,432	2,334	2,593	2,415	2,552	2,422	2,415	2,479	2,301
Funding Rate	28%	26%	26%	29%	30%	30%	30%	34%	33%	29%

OD

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	673	415	415	446	616	910	753	626	845	1,009
Awards	311	266	248	121	147	246	210	162	207	319
Funding Rate	46%	64%	60%	27%	24%	27%	28%	26%	24%	32%

SBE

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	4,283	4,174	4,310	4,130	3,733	4,247	3,956	3,502	3,303	3,171
Awards	1,041	991	1,030	943	871	1,076	918	770	754	706
Funding Rate	24%	24%	24%	23%	23%	25%	23%	22%	23%	22%

TIP¹

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals								3,345	3,405	3,975
Awards								807	977	998
Funding Rate								24%	29%	25%

Table Series Source: FY 2024 proposals and awards are from NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024. Previous Merit Review Digests include data access dates for prior FYs.

¹ In FY 2022, NSF established the Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (TIP). NSF realigned several programs from ENG and OD into the new directorate, including NSF Innovation Corps (I-Corps™), Partnerships for Innovation, Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR), Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR), and the NSF Convergence Accelerator. Proposal and award statistics for ENG and OD for FY 2021 and earlier have not been restated.

EAGER and RAPID Proposals, Awards, and Funding Rates

Table 2 Series – EAGER Proposals, Awards, and Funding Rates by Directorate

NSF

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	743	765	681	666	454	510	375	290	269	342
Awards	585	518	493	498	323	427	283	232	210	252
Funding Rate	79%	68%	72%	75%	71%	84%	75%	80%	78%	74%

BIO

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	117	44	40	81	64	65	37	41	18	16
Awards	104	40	37	68	38	57	34	35	14	12
Funding Rate	89%	91%	93%	84%	59%	88%	92%	85%	78%	75%

CISE

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	209	257	239	161	166	104	64	91	108	45
Awards	163	176	129	136	109	100	59	66	75	41
Funding Rate	78%	68%	54%	84%	66%	96%	92%	73%	69%	91%

EDU

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	81	72	54	16	10	28	32	1	6	7
Awards	45	43	39	15	10	26	30	0	5	6
Funding Rate	56%	60%	72%	94%	100%	93%	94%	0%	83%	86%

ENG

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	258	273	220	260	130	128	54	90	73	155
Awards	203	155	176	153	84	108	53	70	63	97
Funding Rate	79%	57%	80%	59%	65%	84%	98%	78%	86%	63%

GEO

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	27	48	54	45	60	88	44	42	38	42
Awards	26	45	51	41	59	65	41	40	29	27
Funding Rate	96%	94%	94%	91%	98%	74%	93%	95%	76%	64%

MPS

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	21	28	39	79	18	62	32	21	19	19
Awards	17	27	27	69	18	51	31	18	17	17
Funding Rate	81%	96%	69%	87%	100%	82%	97%	86%	89%	89%

OD

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	0	0	0	0	0	17	2	0	0	23
Awards	0	0	0	0	0	8	2	0	0	17
Funding Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	47%	100%	N/A	N/A	74%

SBE

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	30	43	35	24	6	18	110	3	5	12
Awards	27	32	34	16	5	12	33	2	5	12
Funding Rate	90%	74%	97%	67%	83%	67%	30%	67%	100%	100%

TIP¹

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals								1	2	23
Awards								1	2	23
Funding Rate								100%	100%	100%

Table Series Source: FY 2024 proposals and awards are from NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024. Previous Merit Review Digests include data access dates for prior FYs.

¹ In FY 2022, NSF established the Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (TIP). NSF realigned several programs from ENG and OD into the new directorate, including NSF Innovation Corps (I-Corps™), Partnerships for Innovation, Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR), Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR), and the NSF Convergence Accelerator. Proposal and award statistics for ENG and OD for FY 2021 and earlier have not been restated.

Table 3 Series – RAPID Proposals, Awards, and Funding Rates by Directorate

NSF

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	238	155	182	276	195	957	137	121	140	94
Awards	207	145	176	216	142	869	118	117	133	79
Funding Rate	87%	94%	97%	78%	73%	91%	86%	97%	95%	84%

BIO

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	38	25	22	58	15	136	33	21	12	16
Awards	29	19	22	38	13	125	23	20	8	14
Funding Rate	76%	76%	100%	66%	87%	92%	70%	95%	67%	88%

CISE

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	37	5	18	16	12	163	5	0	8	1
Awards	27	5	18	12	4	157	3	0	8	1
Funding Rate	73%	100%	100%	75%	33%	96%	60%	N/A	100%	100%

EDU

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	21	27	7	10	3	71	6	12	4	3
Awards	21	26	7	8	2	56	6	12	4	3
Funding Rate	100%	96%	100%	80%	67%	79%	100%	100%	100%	100%

ENG

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	41	24	38	42	73	203	22	20	30	17
Awards	34	21	36	33	38	188	19	19	27	13
Funding Rate	83%	88%	95%	79%	52%	93%	86%	95%	90%	76%

GEO

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	55	45	60	91	76	62	51	45	72	41
Awards	55	45	57	87	74	61	49	44	72	38
Funding Rate	100%	100%	95%	96%	97%	98%	96%	98%	100%	93%

MPS

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	6	0	1	3	2	75	2	2	0	1
Awards	6	0	1	2	2	61	2	2	0	1
Funding Rate	100%	N/A	100%	67%	100%	81%	100%	100%	N/A	100%

OD

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	0	1	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	1
Awards	0	1	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	1
Funding Rate	N/A	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%	N/A	N/A	N/A	100%

SBE

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	40	28	36	56	14	234	18	21	14	14
Awards	35	28	35	36	9	208	16	20	14	8
Funding Rate	88%	100%	97%	64%	64%	89%	89%	95%	100%	57%

TIP¹

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals								0	0	0
Awards								0	0	0
Funding Rate								N/A	N/A	N/A

Table Series Source: FY 2024 proposals and awards are from NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024. Previous Merit Review Digests include data access dates for prior FYs.

¹ In FY 2022, NSF established the Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (TIP). NSF realigned several programs from ENG and OD into the new directorate, including NSF Innovation Corps (I-Corps™), Partnerships for Innovation, Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR), Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR), and the NSF Convergence Accelerator. Proposal and award statistics for ENG and OD for FY 2021 and earlier have not been restated.

Methods of Proposal Review

Table 4 – FY 2024 Methods of Proposal Review by Directorate

Directorate/ Office	Total Proposals	Ad hoc + Panel	Ad hoc + Panel	Ad hoc- Only	Ad hoc- Only	Panel- Only	Panel- Only	Internally Reviewed	Internally Reviewed
		Proposals	Percent	Proposals	Percent	Proposals	Percent	Proposals	Percent
NSF	40,453	8,311	21%	2,436	6%	27,903	69%	1,803	4%
BIO	4,257	1,919	45%	48	1%	2,159	51%	131	3%
CISE	6,512	358	5%	75	1%	5,833	90%	246	4%
EDU	4,356	236	5%	119	3%	3,935	90%	66	2%
ENG	6,103	389	6%	272	4%	5,144	84%	298	5%
GEO	3,242	1,815	56%	518	16%	653	20%	256	8%
MPS	7,828	1,242	16%	777	10%	5,463	70%	346	4%
OD	1,009	252	25%	58	6%	659	65%	40	4%
SBE	3,171	1,856	59%	186	6%	992	31%	137	4%
TIP	3,975	244	6%	383	10%	3,065	77%	283	7%

Source: NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024.

Notes: The "Internally Reviewed" category includes proposals that were reviewed by NSF program officers but did not receive external reviews.

Table 5 – FY 2024 Number of External Reviews, Total Reviewers, and Reviews Per Reviewer

Category	All Proposals	Ad hoc + Panel Proposals	Ad hoc-Only Proposals	Panel-Only Proposals
Reviews Submitted	150,384	38,906	8,961	102,517
Reviewers	31,245	16,124	6,354	15,072
Average Number of Reviews Submitted per Reviewer	4.8	2.4	1.4	6.8

Source: NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024.

Notes: Number of reviewers in this table represents the count of distinct reviewer IDs that submitted at least one review at any point during the fiscal year. Counts of panelist and ad hoc reviewers may not sum to the overall count of reviewers because individuals may serve as both panelist and ad hoc reviewers in the same fiscal year.

Table 6 – FY 2024 Number of External Reviews by Method and Directorate

Directorate/Office	All Proposals	Ad hoc + Panel Proposals	Ad hoc-Only Proposals	Panel-Only Proposals
NSF	150,384	38,906	8,961	102,517
BIO	17,598	9,721	156	7,721
CISE	24,548	1,603	264	22,681
EDU	17,220	1,025	428	15,767
ENG	22,124	1,813	1,010	19,301
GEO	12,281	7,849	2,049	2,383
MPS	25,811	5,255	2,888	17,668
OD	3,521	1,085	218	2,218
SBE	13,534	9,403	646	3,485
TIP	13,747	1,152	1,302	11,293

Source: NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024.

Notes: Includes only reviews written by individuals and excludes panel summaries. Panel summaries are written by the panel based on the panel discussion. The panel discussions may include the input of reviewers who have read the proposal but have not been asked to provide a separate written review. The number of external reviews, therefore, underestimates the amount of external reviewer input for the “Ad hoc + Panel” and “Panel-Only” methods.

Table 7 – FY 2024 Mean Number of External Reviews per Proposal by Directorate

Directorate/Office	All Proposals	Ad hoc + Panel Proposals	Ad hoc-Only Proposals	Panel-Only Proposals
NSF	3.7	4.7	3.7	3.7
BIO	4.1	5.1	3.3	3.6
CISE	3.8	4.5	3.5	3.9
EDU	4.0	4.3	3.6	4.0
ENG	3.6	4.7	3.7	3.8
GEO	3.8	4.3	4.0	3.6
MPS	3.3	4.2	3.7	3.2
OD	3.5	4.3	3.8	3.4
SBE	4.3	5.1	3.5	3.5
TIP	3.5	4.7	3.4	3.7

Source: NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024.

Notes: Excludes proposals that were internally reviewed.

Time to Decision

Time to decision, or “dwell time,” is the amount of time that passes between receipt of a proposal and notification to the PI about the funding decision. NSF established a goal in the early 2000s to inform applicants about whether their proposals were declined or recommended for funding within six months of receipt.

Table 8 – Dwell Time

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Percentage of Proposals Processed Within Six Months	76%	77%	71%	72%	61%	68%	65%	66%	70%	67%
Mean Dwell Time (Months)	5.8	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.6	5.9
Median Dwell Time (Months)	5.4	5.3	5.4	5.5	5.7	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.4	5.7

Source: FY 2024 proposals are from NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024. Previous Merit Review Digests include data access dates for prior FYs.

Notes: “Dwell time” is the amount of time that passes between receipt of a proposal and notification to the PI about the funding decision.

PI Experience

Table 9 Series – Proposals, Awards, and Funding Rates by PI Experience with NSF

New PIs

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	18,276	18,348	18,757	18,596	15,654	16,221	17,345	15,585	14,652	15,838
Awards	3,320	3,510	3,319	3,257	3,252	3,473	3,453	3,417	3,412	3,303
Funding Rate	18%	19%	18%	18%	21%	21%	20%	22%	23%	21%

Prior PIs

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	31,344	30,937	30,658	29,725	25,370	26,502	26,261	23,555	23,688	24,615
Awards	8,687	8,367	8,128	8,445	7,991	8,695	7,891	7,552	7,644	7,287
Funding Rate	28%	27%	27%	28%	31%	33%	30%	32%	32%	30%

Table Series Source: FY 2024 proposals and awards are from NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024. Previous Merit Review Digests include data access dates for prior FYs.

Notes: A new PI is an individual who has not previously served as the PI or co-PI on any award from NSF (excluding those who have served as a PI or co-PI for doctoral dissertation awards, graduate or postdoctoral fellowships, research planning grants, or conferences, symposia and workshop grants).

Organization Characteristics

Table 10 provides data on proposal, award, and funding rates by the state or U.S. jurisdiction of the awardee organization. Twenty-five states, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands were eligible to participate in the NSF EPSCoR program in FY 2024.

EPSCoR was designed for jurisdictions that have historically received lower amounts of NSF Research and Development funding. Additional information about the EPSCoR program can be found at <https://new.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/epscor>. Additional state-level statistical and funding details are available and published by NSF in *NSF by the Numbers* at <https://www.nsf.gov/about/about-nsf-by-the-numbers>.

Table 10 – FY 2024 Proposals, Awards, and Funding Rates by State or U.S. Jurisdiction

State or Jurisdiction	Proposals	Awards	Funding Rate
NSF Total	40,453	10,590	26%
EPSCoR Total ¹	6,072	1,866	31%
Alabama	554	141	25%
Alaska	90	41	46%
Arkansas	189	51	27%
Delaware	255	67	26%
Hawaii	154	60	39%
Idaho	181	56	31%
Iowa	397	124	31%
Kansas	260	85	33%
Kentucky	260	80	31%
Louisiana	404	131	32%
Maine	163	51	31%
Mississippi	254	65	26%
Montana	131	51	39%
Nebraska	266	85	32%
Nevada	213	50	23%
New Hampshire	209	51	24%
New Mexico	301	92	31%
North Dakota	95	19	20%
Oklahoma	361	95	26%
Puerto Rico	76	30	39%
Rhode Island	317	148	47%
South Carolina	468	137	29%
South Dakota	122	42	34%
Vermont	100	34	34%
Virgin Islands	6	2	33%
West Virginia	160	52	33%
Wyoming	86	26	30%
Non-EPSCoR Total ²	34,329	8,713	25%
Arizona	976	243	25%
California	4,356	1,170	27%
Colorado	1,036	277	27%
Connecticut	544	126	23%
District of Columbia	438	149	34%

State or Jurisdiction	Proposals	Awards	Funding Rate
Florida	1,804	361	20%
Georgia	1,162	263	23%
Illinois	1,476	452	31%
Indiana	1,159	262	23%
Maryland	895	233	26%
Massachusetts	2,351	671	29%
Michigan	1,372	376	27%
Minnesota	473	158	33%
Missouri	681	126	19%
New Jersey	997	248	25%
New York	2,911	764	26%
North Carolina	1,320	331	25%
Ohio	1,057	205	19%
Oregon	469	130	28%
Pennsylvania	1,916	512	27%
Tennessee	688	170	25%
Texas	3,007	639	21%
Utah	513	110	21%
Virginia	1,408	346	25%
Washington	711	225	32%
Wisconsin	609	166	27%
Other ³	52	11	21%

Source: NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024.

¹ Institutions in Guam were eligible to participate in EPSCoR in FY 2024 but are not included in this total. They are included in the “Other” category to minimize the risk of revealing information that is confidential, sensitive, or otherwise protected.

² Institutions in American Samoa were not eligible to participate in EPSCoR in FY 2024 but are not included in this total. They are included in the “Other” category to minimize the risk of revealing information that is confidential, sensitive, or otherwise protected.

³ “Other” includes institutions in Guam (eligible to participate in EPSCoR in FY 2024), American Samoa (not eligible to participate in EPSCoR in FY 2024), and a small number of entries coded as “other” for the state name. These have been combined to minimize the risk of revealing information that is confidential, sensitive, or otherwise protected.

B. Characteristics of Research Awards

Research awards are a subset of competitive awards. They do not include cooperative agreements or fellowship awards; operations costs for centers and facilities; grants for equipment, instrumentation, conferences, and symposia; SBIR awards; or education and training grants.

These data are based on proposal budget and award data at the time of the initial award and do not include post-award changes, such as extensions of the period of performance or funding supplements.

Research Proposals, Awards, and Funding Rates

Table 11 – Research Proposals, Awards, and Funding Rates

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	40,869	41,034	40,678	40,364	33,613	35,115	35,787	32,287	32,129	33,545
Awards	8,993	8,782	8,553	9,043	8,580	9,665	9,132	8,735	8,535	8,056
Funding Rate	22%	21%	21%	22%	26%	28%	26%	27%	27%	24%

Source: FY 2024 proposals and awards are from NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024. Previous Merit Review Digests include data access dates for prior FYs.

Research Award Size and Duration

Table 12 Series – Annualized Award Amount per Research Project (in Thousands)

Nominal Dollars

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Median	\$130	\$133	\$133	\$140	\$147	\$150	\$150	\$150	\$154	\$153
Mean	\$171	\$173	\$169	\$178	\$189	\$194	\$198	\$202	\$211	\$209

Constant (FY 2024) Dollars (i.e., Adjusted for Inflation)

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Median	\$168	\$170	\$167	\$172	\$177	\$178	\$172	\$161	\$158	\$153
Mean	\$219	\$221	\$212	\$219	\$228	\$231	\$228	\$217	\$216	\$209

Table Series Source: FY 2024 awards are from NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024. Previous Merit Review Digests include data access dates for prior FYs. Office of Management and Budget Historical Table 10.1 Gross Domestic Product and Deflators Used in the Historical Tables: 1940-2029,

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/historical-tables/>. Constant (FY 2024) dollars use FY 2024 as a baseline.

Notes: This analysis is focused on projects, which count multi-institutional collaborative submissions as a single project.

Table 13 Series – Annualized Award Amount per Research Project by Directorate (Nominal Dollars, in Thousands)

BIO

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Median	\$186	\$200	\$198	\$197	\$215	\$200	\$222	\$227	\$234	\$244
Mean	\$237	\$243	\$223	\$226	\$263	\$243	\$260	\$278	\$288	\$267

CISE

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Median	\$161	\$155	\$156	\$166	\$167	\$166	\$167	\$172	\$200	\$197
Mean	\$187	\$198	\$187	\$199	\$210	\$203	\$224	\$228	\$238	\$220

EDU

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Median	\$167	\$200	\$198	\$296	\$238	\$191	\$167	\$168	\$180	\$199
Mean	\$289	\$318	\$295	\$346	\$267	\$277	\$275	\$274	\$274	\$286

ENG

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Median	\$103	\$102	\$107	\$113	\$117	\$125	\$119	\$130	\$136	\$138
Mean	\$122	\$124	\$125	\$131	\$135	\$148	\$141	\$163	\$174	\$166

GEO

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Median	\$144	\$150	\$150	\$166	\$155	\$167	\$172	\$185	\$186	\$183
Mean	\$183	\$185	\$190	\$216	\$224	\$225	\$230	\$252	\$236	\$249

MPS

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Median	\$125	\$122	\$120	\$123	\$130	\$130	\$137	\$135	\$136	\$138
Mean	\$149	\$142	\$138	\$146	\$151	\$166	\$164	\$159	\$170	\$168

OD

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Median	\$83	\$83	\$84	\$100	\$402	\$272	\$150	\$136	\$100	\$189
Mean	\$244	\$206	\$309	\$177	\$551	\$436	\$328	\$359	\$277	\$349

SBE

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Median	\$112	\$117	\$119	\$123	\$129	\$144	\$135	\$141	\$145	\$137
Mean	\$138	\$136	\$146	\$141	\$155	\$154	\$174	\$168	\$174	\$167

TIP¹

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Median								\$50	\$50	\$50
Mean								\$116	\$202	\$203

Table Series Source: FY 2024 awards are from NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024. Previous Merit Review Digests include data access dates for prior FYs.

Notes: This analysis is focused on projects, which count multi-institutional collaborative submissions as a single project. Only lead proposals for new projects were included in this analysis.

¹ In FY 2022, NSF established the Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (TIP). NSF realigned several programs from ENG and OD into the new directorate, including NSF Innovation Corps (I-Corps™), Partnerships for Innovation, Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR), Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR), and the NSF Convergence Accelerator. Proposal and award statistics for ENG and OD for FY 2021 and earlier have not been restated.

Table 14 – Mean Award Duration (Research Awards)

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Duration (Years)	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.0	2.8	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.0

Source: FY 2024 awards are from NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024. Previous Merit Review Digests include data access dates for prior FYs.

PI Funding Rate

Table 15 – PI Funding Rate by Award Time Period (Research Awards)

Category	2013- 2015	2014- 2016	2015- 2017	2016- 2018	2017- 2019	2018- 2020	2019- 2021	2020- 2022	2021- 2023	2022- 2024
PIs Applied	53,893	54,237	54,648	54,595	52,574	51,700	50,806	50,799	50,312	50,450
PIs Awarded	19,875	20,647	21,055	21,232	20,697	21,814	21,880	22,180	21,489	20,997
PI Funding Rate	37%	38%	39%	39%	39%	42%	43%	44%	43%	42%

Source: FY 2022-FY 2024 proposals and awards are from NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024. Previous Merit Review Digests include data access dates for prior FYs.

Notes: PI funding rate is the number of unique PIs receiving a research award divided by the total number of unique PIs submitting proposals in the same three-year window.

PI Career Stage

Table 16 Series – Early and Later Career PIs (Research Awards)

Early Career PIs

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	15,762	16,097	16,299	16,254	13,470	13,993	14,046	12,667	12,554	13,419
Awards	3,091	3,131	3,053	3,211	3,192	3,499	3,393	3,294	3,284	2,975
Funding Rate	20%	19%	19%	20%	24%	25%	24%	26%	26%	22%

Later Career PIs

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Proposals	25,070	24,913	24,341	24,080	20,135	21,117	21,738	19,617	19,574	20,126
Awards	5,896	5,649	5,500	5,830	5,388	6,166	5,739	5,441	5,251	5,081
Funding Rate	24%	23%	23%	24%	27%	29%	26%	28%	27%	25%

Table Series Source: FY 2024 proposals and awards are from NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024. Previous Merit Review Digests include data access dates for prior FYs.

Notes: An early career PI is defined as someone within 10 years of receiving their last degree at the time of award. Prior to FY 2020, NSF defined an early career PI as someone within seven years of receiving their last degree at the time of award. The definition was changed to align with the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) Early Career Doctorates Survey (ECDS). The table restates the data using the new definition.

Graduate Student, Postdoctoral Researcher, and Senior Personnel Funding Support

This section estimates direct NSF support provided to graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and senior personnel on research proposals that are subsequently awarded.¹⁴ NSF-funded research awards directly support these personnel by reimbursing the award institution for their salary and other expenses. Estimates exclude other categories of personnel that may be included in the award budget, such as technicians, programmers, and undergraduate students. These estimates also exclude direct support provided through other award categories, such as individual postdoctoral fellowships, NSF Graduate Research Fellowship awards, and other individual awards to graduate students. Estimates are based on budgeted amounts in the original proposals and not actual expenditures. Budget details are extracted for research grants active in the year indicated. Award budgets include the amount of funding requested and a count of individuals by personnel category.

¹⁴ Senior personnel include PIs, co-PIs, and other individuals designated on the proposal budget as senior personnel.

Table 17 – Estimated Number of People Budgeted on Successful Research Awards by Year

Category	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Graduate Students	26,882	27,099	26,693	26,997	27,159	29,043	30,292	29,224	28,673	25,629
Postdoctoral Researchers	4,586	4,460	4,442	4,516	4,230	4,672	5,008	4,714	4,398	3,611
Senior Personnel	33,831	35,326	33,296	35,870	33,529	38,865	44,564	42,180	48,310	44,608

Source: FY 2024 awards are from NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024. Previous Merit Review Digests include data access dates for prior FYs.

Notes: The numbers reflect the expected number of people supported by the grant as specified in the yearly award budget.

Table 18 – Average Annual Budgeted Support for Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Researchers on Successful Research Awards per Award (Nominal Dollars)

Fiscal Year	Average Annual Budgeted Graduate Student Support on Research Awards with Graduate Students	Average Annual Budgeted Postdoctoral Researcher Support on Research Awards with Postdoctoral Researchers
2015	\$ 29,875	\$ 35,889
2016	\$ 30,657	\$ 36,339
2017	\$ 30,766	\$ 36,700
2018	\$ 31,182	\$ 35,861
2019	\$ 32,743	\$ 39,633
2020	\$ 30,413	\$ 35,526
2021	\$ 34,368	\$ 38,743
2022	\$ 35,184	\$ 42,390
2023	\$ 36,902	\$ 42,004
2024	\$ 37,097	\$ 42,689

Source: FY 2024 awards are from NSF Data Lake, accessed 10/1/2024. Previous Merit Review Digests include data access dates for prior FYs.

Notes: Amounts do not represent an average stipend amount paid per student or postdoctoral researcher. This table shows the average annual amount of graduate student support or postdoctoral researcher support requested in the proposal budgets for research awards divided, respectively, by the subset of research awards that requested funding for graduate students and by the subset of research awards that requested funding for postdoctoral researchers.

4. Appendix

A. Abbreviations

BIO	Directorate for Biological Sciences
CHIPS	Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors
CISE	Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering
EAC	Evaluation and Assessment Capability
EAGER	EARly-Concept Grants for Exploratory Research
ECDS	Early Career Doctorates Survey
EDU	Directorate for STEM Education
ENG	Directorate for Engineering
EPSCoR	Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research
FY	Fiscal Year (October 1-September 30)
GEO	Directorate for Geosciences
IPA	Intergovernmental Personnel Act
MPS	Directorate for Mathematical and Physical Sciences
NCSES	National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics
NSF	U.S. National Science Foundation
OD	Office of the Director
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PI	Principal Investigator
RAISE	Research Advanced by Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering
RAPID	Grants for Rapid Response Research
S&E	Science and Engineering
SBE	Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences
SBIR	Small Business Innovative Research
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
STTR	Small Business Technology Transfer
TIP	Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships
U.S.	United States

B. Data Sources and Notes

The data tables in this report were produced using data from NSF's Data Lake. Data Lake is an internal NSF system used for reporting. It is a compilation of data from NSF's transactional administrative systems that manage the proposal submission, review, and award process. At the end of the most recent fiscal year of the report, a data extract is saved for all proposals that were awarded or declined in that fiscal year. A proposal is included in a given fiscal year based on whether the action to award or decline the proposal was taken by NSF in that fiscal year, not whether the proposal was received in that fiscal year.

Constant (i.e., inflation-adjusted) dollars were calculated using the Office of Management and Budget's Historical Table 10.1 Gross Domestic Product and Deflators Used in the Historical Tables: 1940-2029 at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/historical-tables/>, accessed on 10/2024. FY 2024 is the reference year (i.e., one constant dollar equals one FY 2024 dollar).

Directorate-level details reflect the NSF organization structure in FY 2024.

To minimize the risk of revealing information that is confidential, sensitive, or otherwise protected (such as privacy-protected data and information about declined proposals), the Merit Review Digest combines or suppresses table cells with a small number of proposals or awards. If a table cell is suppressed, then at least one complementary cell is suppressed to avoid logical deduction of the primary cell. This rule does not apply to cell sizes of zero because there is no proposal or award data to keep confidential in those instances.

NSF collects demographic data from PIs to better understand who is submitting proposals and receiving awards. The demographic data collected are confidential and used for aggregate statistical reporting. They are not included in the proposal or shared with reviewers.