

# NSF 24-557: NSF Ocean Observatories Initiative Facility Board (OOIFB) Administrative Support Office

## Program Solicitation

### Document Information

#### Document History

- **Posted:** March 12, 2024
- **Replaces:** [NSF 18-527](#)

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**National Science Foundation**  
Directorate for Geosciences  
Division of Ocean Sciences

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

June 10, 2024



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## Important Information And Revision Notes

Any proposal submitted in response to this solicitation should be submitted in accordance with the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) that is in effect for the relevant due date to which the proposal is being submitted. The NSF PAPPG is regularly revised and it is the responsibility of the proposer to ensure that the proposal meets the requirements specified in this solicitation and the applicable version of the PAPPG. Submitting a proposal prior to a specified deadline does not negate this requirement.

## Summary Of Program Requirements

### General Information

#### Program Title:

NSF Ocean Observatories Initiative Facility Board (OOIFB) Administrative Support Office

#### Synopsis of Program:

The NSF Ocean Observatories Initiative (OOI) is a community-inspired and community-serving large scale research facility enabling ocean science research. It consists of an integrated network of instrumentation arrays, distributed in various coastal and global ocean locations that collect, archive, and distribute quality oceanic and marine atmospheric data to the ocean and Earth science communities. NSF has established the NSF Ocean Observatories Initiative Facility Board (OOIFB) to engage the user community through workshops, community meetings, and other interactive mechanisms to provide the NSF OOI and the NSF with a better understanding of the current and future community needs as they relate to the scientific and technological innovation that the OOI supports.

This solicitation invites proposals for an Administrative Support Office to support the OOIFB in carrying out its responsibilities. The Support Office is responsible for organization of meetings and workshops, coordination and support for travel for OOIFB members and workshop participants, maintenance of the OOIFB website, as well as other activities described within the Program Description section of this solicitation.

#### Cognizant Program Officer(s):

*Please note that the following information is current at the time of publishing. See program website for any updates to the points of contact.*

- George Voulgaris, telephone: (703) 292-7399, email: [gvoulgar@nsf.gov](mailto:gvoulgar@nsf.gov)

#### Applicable Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):

- 47.050 --- Geosciences

## **Award Information**

**Anticipated Type of Award:** Standard Grant or Continuing Grant

**Estimated Number of Awards:** 1

**Anticipated Funding Amount:** \$3,500,000

\$3.5 million total for five years at \$700,000 per year. Amount is subject to the availability of funds.

## **Eligibility Information**

### **Who May Submit Proposals:**

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) - Two- and four-year IHEs (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in the US, acting on behalf of their faculty members. Special Instructions for International Branch Campuses of US IHEs: If the proposal includes funding to be provided to an international branch campus of a US institution of higher education (including through use of subawards and consultant arrangements), the proposer must explain the benefit(s) to the project of performance at the international branch campus, and justify why the project activities cannot be performed at the US campus.
- Non-profit, non-academic organizations: Independent museums, observatories, research laboratories, professional societies and similar organizations located in the U.S. that are directly associated with educational or research activities.

### **Who May Serve as PI:**

Restricted to individuals who are not serving as PI, co-PI or Senior/Key Personnel for active or pending OOI Operations and Maintenance Awards or subawards.

### **Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:**

There are no restrictions or limits.

### **Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or co-PI: 1**

## **Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions**

### **A. Proposal Preparation Instructions**

- **Letters of Intent:** Not required
- **Preliminary Proposal Submission:** Not required
- **Full Proposals:**
  - Full Proposals submitted via Research.gov: *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG)* guidelines apply. The complete text of the PAPPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).
  - Full Proposals submitted via Grants.gov: *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov* guidelines apply (Note: The *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide* is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=grantsgovguide](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide)).

## B. Budgetary Information

- **Cost Sharing Requirements:**

Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.

- **Indirect Cost (F&A) Limitations:**

Not Applicable

- **Other Budgetary Limitations:**

Not Applicable

## C. Due Dates

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

June 10, 2024

## Proposal Review Information Criteria

### Merit Review Criteria:

National Science Board approved criteria. Additional merit review criteria apply. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.

### Award Administration Information

#### Award Conditions:

Additional award conditions apply. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.

#### Reporting Requirements:

Additional reporting requirements apply. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.

## I. Introduction

As part of its mission the Division of Ocean Sciences ([OCE](#)) supports facilities that provide services and infrastructure to support research and education in the ocean sciences. One such facility is the NSF Ocean Observatories Initiative ([OOI](#) [🔗](#)) which consists of an integrated network of cabled and non-cabled arrays of instrumentation distributed in various coastal and global ocean locations. Data flow is enabled by an integrated system of hardware and software (cyberinfrastructure) that receives, processes, and broadly distributes measurements from over 800 instruments in fixed and mobile locations comprising the observatory. The OOI is designed to accommodate new instruments to support future work proposed by the user community.

This infrastructure facilitates interdisciplinary investigation of short-term meteorological, tectonic, volcanic, geological, geophysical, and ecological events, as well as long-term trends in ocean circulation patterns, climate change, ocean acidity, geophysical events, and ecosystems. In May 2023, NSF renewed the existing Cooperative Agreement (CA) for OOI Management and Operation (O&M) for the period October 1, 2023, through September 30, 2028.

OCE has also established an independent and robust committee to engage and nurture the research community and to represent and encourage OOI-based science to the national and international community at large. Initial membership of the Ocean Observatories Initiative Facility Board (OOIFB) was established following the release of a Dear Colleague Letter ([NSF 17-034](#)). Presently, appointments are made following the procedures described in the OOIFB Charter ([Charter – Ocean Observatories Initiative Facility Board – OOIFB](#) [🔗](#))

This solicitation seeks proposals from organizations that wish to be considered for the Administrative Support Office to assist the OOIFB in carrying out its responsibilities as described herein and in the [OOIFB Terms of Reference](#).

The duration of the award is intended to be five years.

## II. Program Description

### A. Background

The Ocean Observatories Initiative Facility Board (OOIFB) has been established to provide independent, community-based evaluation regarding the activities and performance of the NSF OOI facility. The OOIFB promotes engagement and provides the OOI and the NSF with current and forward-looking community input on the cutting-edge science and technological innovation that the NSF OOI facility can support. The OOIFB includes seven non-conflicted members of the oceanographic community, one of whom serves as Chair, and two additional representatives from the NSF OOI Operator. In-person/ hybrid meetings of the OOIFB are scheduled at least once per year, more commonly twice. In addition, one teleconference call is scheduled every month.


Key responsibilities of the OOIFB are:

- Serving as the prime scientific and technical conduit among the oceanographic community, the NSF, and the OOI operator.
- Providing leadership in community oversight of the OOI Science Plan (<https://ooifb.org/ooi-science-plan/> [↗](#)).
- Conducting workshops, surveys, community meetings, and/or other appropriate mechanisms, to engage the user community to inform the OOI regarding relevant advances in scientific inquiry, education, and technological innovations.
- Developing and implementing strategies to expand scientific and public awareness of the unique scientific and technological opportunities of the OOI and ensuring that the oceanographic community is kept informed of OOI developments.
- Identifying existing and potential new end-user communities, their needs for data and meta-data information, and providing feedback on the OOI's effectiveness in disseminating this information to end-user communities and the general public.
- Helping to identify and where appropriate help establish collaborative relationships with potential governmental, industrial, educational, and international partners in the OOI.
- Supporting fair and consistent access to the OOI by all sectors of the user community.
- Promoting community adherence to applicable NSF and OOI policies for data collection, sample archiving, etc. as pertaining to OOI activities.
- Ensuring the appropriateness of existing and/or facilitating the evolution of performance standards for hardware and cyberinfrastructure, and in doing so addressing issues such as short- and long-term instrument calibration, incorporation of novel technologies, sampling, expansion of technological upgrades, etc.
- Maintaining existing and/or establishing new committees as required for obtaining in-depth assessments of highly specialized aspects of OOI components and operations. Currently, the OOIFB has established the Data Systems Committee (DSC, <https://ooifb.org/working-groups/data-systems-committee-dsc-2/> [↗](#)) tasked to help ensure timely and reliable access to high-quality OOI data. The DSC evaluates and recommends improvements to the data services policies and practices of the OOI Facility.

### B. Statement of Work

The **OOIFB Administrative Support Office** will broadly facilitate activities necessary for the OOIFB to successfully accomplish its general purpose and responsibilities outlined above. The Administrative Support Office will provide the management structure and resources to seamlessly enable the OOIFB and its committees to carry out the mandate as

described herein and in the OOIFB Terms of Reference ([www.nsf.gov/geo/oce/programs/ooi/ooifb-tor.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/geo/oce/programs/ooi/ooifb-tor.jsp)). Specific responsibilities of the prospective recipient will include:

- Coordinating logistics and travel arrangements needed to schedule and conduct the semi-annual meetings of the OOIFB.
- Coordinating and organizing monthly teleconferences for the OOIFB and DSC, respectively and any other committee that may be established.
- Supporting travel costs for OOIFB and committee members for participation in semi-annual meeting(s).
- Recording the minutes of calls and meetings and issuing publicly available versions within one month of each meeting's occurrence.
- Coordinating and supporting workshops and other community engagement activities requested by the OOIFB, including a Town Hall or similar meeting per year at a major conference in the U.S. and other activities that might be funded separately.
- Assisting the OOIFB in preparing reports summarizing actions, findings, and recommendations from community-based workshops.
- Providing other assistance as determined by the OOIFB Chair needed to successfully execute OOIFB responsibilities defined in the OOIFB Terms of Reference.
- Supporting salary requirements of the OOIFB Chair for one month per year during the period of performance.
- Maintaining and regularly updating the OOIFB website (<https://ooifb.org/> ) that disseminates information to the OOI community and general public concerning ongoing activities, policies, planning, and accomplishments of the OOIFB.
- Developing and providing Annual Work Plans and the associated costs to NSF to carry out activities of the OOIFB Administrative Support Office.
- Initiating, managing, and overseeing the funding allocations required to support the OOIFB and its committees
- Providing annual reporting of OOIFB Administrative Support Office status in terms of tasks completed, milestones achieved, and funds obligated and expended.

### **III. Award Information**

One award is expected to be made to a qualified organization. Estimated program budget and average award size/duration are subject to the availability of funds.

### **IV. Eligibility Information**

#### **Who May Submit Proposals:**

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) - Two- and four-year IHEs (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in the US, acting on behalf of their faculty members. Special Instructions for International Branch Campuses of US IHEs: If the proposal includes funding to be provided to an international branch campus of a US institution of higher education (including through use of subawards and consultant arrangements), the proposer must explain the benefit(s) to the project of performance at the international branch campus, and justify why the project activities cannot be performed at the US campus.
- Non-profit, non-academic organizations: Independent museums, observatories, research laboratories, professional societies and similar organizations located in the U.S. that are directly associated with educational or research activities.

#### **Who May Serve as PI:**

Restricted to individuals who are not serving as PI, co-PI or Senior/Key Personnel for active or pending OOI Operations and Maintenance Awards or subawards.

**Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:**

There are no restrictions or limits.

**Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or co-PI: 1**

**Additional Eligibility Info:**

To qualify for an award from this solicitation, the proposing organization must demonstrate the capability to provide effective support to the OOIFB.

## **V. Proposal Preparation And Submission Instructions**

### **A. Proposal Preparation Instructions**

**Full Proposal Preparation Instructions:** Proposers may opt to submit proposals in response to this Program Solicitation via Research.gov or Grants.gov.

- Full Proposals submitted via Research.gov: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the general guidelines contained in the *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG). The complete text of the PAPPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg). Paper copies of the PAPPG may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-8134 or by e-mail from [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov). The Prepare New Proposal setup will prompt you for the program solicitation number.
- Full proposals submitted via Grants.gov: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation via Grants.gov should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov*. The complete text of the *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide* is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: ([https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=grantsgovguide](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide)). To obtain copies of the Application Guide and Application Forms Package, click on the Apply tab on the Grants.gov site, then click on the Apply Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Application Instructions link and enter the funding opportunity number, (the program solicitation number without the NSF prefix) and press the Download Package button. Paper copies of the Grants.gov Application Guide also may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-8134 or by e-mail from [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov).

In determining which method to utilize in the electronic preparation and submission of the proposal, please note the following:

**Collaborative Proposals.** All collaborative proposals submitted as separate submissions from multiple organizations must be submitted via Research.gov. PAPPG Chapter II.E.3 provides additional information on collaborative proposals.


See PAPPG Chapter II.D.2 for guidance on the required sections of a full research proposal submitted to NSF. Please note that the proposal preparation instructions provided in this program solicitation may deviate from the PAPPG instructions.

**The following instructions supplement the guidance in the PAPPG and NSF Grants.gov Application Guide.**

**Proposal Set-Up:** Proposers should select "Center" for the Type of Proposal.





**Project Description (up to 15 pages):** In addition to the guidance specified in the PAPPG, including the requirement for a separate section labeled "Broader Impacts," the Project Description section of the proposal should address the qualifications and capabilities of the proposing organization to perform the responsibilities of the OOIFB Administrative Support Office as described in Section II.B. of this solicitation. The Project Description must:

Clearly present the management structure, capability, experience, and qualifications of the organization proposed to serve as the Administrative Support Office. Include an aggregated description of the internal and external resources (both physical and personnel) that the organization and any potential collaborating members will provide to the program. Explain the roles and responsibilities of each known or planned team entity, if applicable. Describe the following:

- How the proposed management structure and PI will interact with and support the OOIFB established by NSF.
- The approach to accomplishing the tasks necessary to support meetings of the OOIFB, the DSC, and any other committees that may be established.
- The approach to accomplishing the tasks necessary to conduct workshops, Town Halls, and other community engagement activities requested by the OOIFB.
- How the proposing organization will directly interact with and assist the OOIFB Chair in accomplishing the OOIFB mandate.
- How the proposed Administrative Support Office will further develop and maintain OOIFB's website (<https://ooifb.org/> ) that describes and summarizes OOIFB activities completed and in process.
- How the proposed Administrative Support Office will plan activities and determine budgets needed for submittal of Annual Work Plans to the NSF.
- The approach to initiating, managing, and overseeing the funding allocations required to support the OOIFB.
- How the reporting requirements required by this solicitation will be accomplished in a timely and efficient manner.

Please note that all information relevant to determining the quality of the proposed work must be included as part of the Project Description.

**General Information:** For additional information on this competition, including NSF practices and policies, proposing organizations should contact the Cognizant Program Officer: George Voulgaris ([gvoulgar@nsf.gov](mailto:gvoulgar@nsf.gov)). The following publicly available documents will be informative:

- Leading the World in Discovery and Innovation, STEM Talent Development and the Delivery of Benefits from Research - NSF Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2022 - 2026 ([https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf22068](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf22068)).
- Ocean Observatories Initiative (OOI) Science Plan: Exciting Opportunities Using OOI Data [https://ooifb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/OOISciencePlan\\_V1-1\\_LowRes.pdf](https://ooifb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/OOISciencePlan_V1-1_LowRes.pdf) 
- Ocean Observatories Initiative Website <https://oceanobservatories.org> 
- Ocean Observatories Initiative Facilities Board Website <https://ooifb.org/> 
- Dear Colleague Letter: Nominations for Participation on "Ocean Observatories Initiative Facility Board" (OOIFB) [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf17034?WT.mc\\_ev=click](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf17034?WT.mc_ev=click)
- Ocean Observatories Initiative Facility Board: Terms of Reference <https://www.nsf.gov/geo/oce/programs/ooi/ooifb-tor.jsp>.
- Trowbridge J, Weller R, Kelley D, Dever E, Plueddemann A, Barth JA and Kawka O (2019). The Ocean Observatories Initiative. Front. Mar. Sci. 6:74. doi:10.3389/fmars.2019.00074 

## **B. Budgetary Information**

### **Cost Sharing:**

Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.

### **Budget Preparation Instructions:**



The full proposal should include a budget for each year of the proposed operational period from October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2029. The budget should be based on total funding of no more than \$700,000 per year, inclusive of indirect costs. The proposal should provide all staffing and budgeting information needed to describe how the organization would fulfill the recipient responsibilities in Section II of this solicitation. Requested budget amounts for each year of the proposal should reflect the level considered necessary to perform the NSF-funded activities described in the proposal.

Organizations that have not previously received NSF awards should review the NSF Prospective New Awardee Guide ([https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf20032&org=NSF](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf20032&org=NSF)) for additional guidance in preparing their budget submission.

### C. Due Dates

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

June 10, 2024

### D. Research.gov/Grants.gov Requirements

#### For Proposals Submitted Via Research.gov:

To prepare and submit a proposal via Research.gov, see detailed technical instructions available at: [https://www.research.gov/research-portal/appmanager/base/desktop?\\_nfpb=true&\\_pageLabel=research\\_node\\_display&\\_nodePath=/researchGov/Service/Desktop/ProposalPreparationand](https://www.research.gov/research-portal/appmanager/base/desktop?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=research_node_display&_nodePath=/researchGov/Service/Desktop/ProposalPreparationand). For Research.gov user support, call the Research.gov Help Desk at 1-800-381-1532 or e-mail [rgov@nsf.gov](mailto:rgov@nsf.gov). The Research.gov Help Desk answers general technical questions related to the use of the Research.gov system. Specific questions related to this program solicitation should be referred to the NSF program staff contact(s) listed in Section VIII of this funding opportunity.

#### For Proposals Submitted Via Grants.gov:

Before using Grants.gov for the first time, each organization must register to create an institutional profile. Once registered, the applicant's organization can then apply for any federal grant on the Grants.gov website. Comprehensive information about using Grants.gov is available on the Grants.gov Applicant Resources webpage: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants.html>. In addition, the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide (see link in Section V.A) provides instructions regarding the technical preparation of proposals via Grants.gov. For Grants.gov user support, contact the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or by email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The Grants.gov Contact Center answers general technical questions related to the use of Grants.gov. Specific questions related to this program solicitation should be referred to the NSF program staff contact(s) listed in Section VIII of this solicitation.

**Submitting the Proposal:** Once all documents have been completed, the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) must submit the application to Grants.gov and verify the desired funding opportunity and agency to which the application is submitted. The AOR must then sign and submit the application to Grants.gov. The completed application will be transferred to Research.gov for further processing.

The NSF [Grants.gov Proposal Processing in Research.gov informational page](#) provides submission guidance to applicants and links to helpful resources including the NSF [Grants.gov Application Guide](#), [Grants.gov Proposal Processing in Research.gov how-to guide](#), and [Grants.gov Submitted Proposals Frequently Asked Questions](#). Grants.gov proposals must pass all NSF pre-check and post-check validations in order to be accepted by Research.gov at NSF.

When submitting via Grants.gov, NSF strongly recommends applicants initiate proposal submission at least five business days in advance of a deadline to allow adequate time to address NSF compliance errors and resubmissions by 5:00 p.m. submitting organization's local time on the deadline. Please note that some errors

cannot be corrected in Grants.gov. Once a proposal passes pre-checks but fails any post-check, an applicant can only correct and submit the in-progress proposal in Research.gov.

Proposers that submitted via Research.gov may use Research.gov to verify the status of their submission to NSF. For proposers that submitted via Grants.gov, until an application has been received and validated by NSF, the Authorized Organizational Representative may check the status of an application on Grants.gov. After proposers have received an e-mail notification from NSF, Research.gov should be used to check the status of an application.

## **VI. NSF Proposal Processing And Review Procedures**

Proposals received by NSF are assigned to the appropriate NSF program for acknowledgement and, if they meet NSF requirements, for review. All proposals are carefully reviewed by a scientist, engineer, or educator serving as an NSF Program Officer, and usually by three to ten other persons outside NSF either as *ad hoc* reviewers, panelists, or both, who are experts in the particular fields represented by the proposal. These reviewers are selected by Program Officers charged with oversight of the review process. Proposers are invited to suggest names of persons they believe are especially well qualified to review the proposal and/or persons they would prefer not review the proposal. These suggestions may serve as one source in the reviewer selection process at the Program Officer's discretion. Submission of such names, however, is optional. Care is taken to ensure that reviewers have no conflicts of interest with the proposal. In addition, Program Officers may obtain comments from site visits before recommending final action on proposals. Senior NSF staff further review recommendations for awards. A flowchart that depicts the entire NSF proposal and award process (and associated timeline) is included in PAPPG Exhibit III-1.

A comprehensive description of the Foundation's merit review process is available on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit\\_review/](https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/).

Proposers should also be aware of core strategies that are essential to the fulfillment of NSF's mission, as articulated in *Leading the World in Discovery and Innovation, STEM Talent Development and the Delivery of Benefits from Research - NSF Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2022 - 2026*. These strategies are integrated in the program planning and implementation process, of which proposal review is one part. NSF's mission is particularly well-implemented through the integration of research and education and broadening participation in NSF programs, projects, and activities.

One of the strategic objectives in support of NSF's mission is to foster integration of research and education through the programs, projects, and activities it supports at academic and research institutions. These institutions must recruit, train, and prepare a diverse STEM workforce to advance the frontiers of science and participate in the U.S. technology-based economy. NSF's contribution to the national innovation ecosystem is to provide cutting-edge research under the guidance of the Nation's most creative scientists and engineers. NSF also supports development of a strong science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce by investing in building the knowledge that informs improvements in STEM teaching and learning.

NSF's mission calls for the broadening of opportunities and expanding participation of groups, institutions, and geographic regions that are underrepresented in STEM disciplines, which is essential to the health and vitality of science and engineering. NSF is committed to this principle of diversity and deems it central to the programs, projects, and activities it considers and supports.

### **A. Merit Review Principles and Criteria**

The National Science Foundation strives to invest in a robust and diverse portfolio of projects that creates new knowledge and enables breakthroughs in understanding across all areas of science and engineering research and education. To identify which projects to support, NSF relies on a merit review process that incorporates consideration of both the technical aspects of a proposed project and its potential to contribute more broadly to advancing NSF's mission "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense; and for other purposes." NSF makes every effort to conduct a fair, competitive, transparent merit review process for the selection of projects.

#### **1. Merit Review Principles**

These principles are to be given due diligence by PIs and organizations when preparing proposals and managing projects, by reviewers when reading and evaluating proposals, and by NSF program staff when determining whether or not to recommend proposals for funding and while overseeing awards. Given that NSF is the primary federal agency charged with nurturing and supporting excellence in basic research and education, the following three principles apply:

- All NSF projects should be of the highest quality and have the potential to advance, if not transform, the frontiers of knowledge.
- NSF projects, in the aggregate, should contribute more broadly to achieving societal goals. These "Broader Impacts" may be accomplished through the research itself, through activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project. The project activities may be based on previously established and/or innovative methods and approaches, but in either case must be well justified.
- Meaningful assessment and evaluation of NSF funded projects should be based on appropriate metrics, keeping in mind the likely correlation between the effect of broader impacts and the resources provided to implement projects. If the size of the activity is limited, evaluation of that activity in isolation is not likely to be meaningful. Thus, assessing the effectiveness of these activities may best be done at a higher, more aggregated, level than the individual project.

With respect to the third principle, even if assessment of Broader Impacts outcomes for particular projects is done at an aggregated level, PIs are expected to be accountable for carrying out the activities described in the funded project. Thus, individual projects should include clearly stated goals, specific descriptions of the activities that the PI intends to do, and a plan in place to document the outputs of those activities.

These three merit review principles provide the basis for the merit review criteria, as well as a context within which the users of the criteria can better understand their intent.

## 2. Merit Review Criteria

All NSF proposals are evaluated through use of the two National Science Board approved merit review criteria. In some instances, however, NSF will employ additional criteria as required to highlight the specific objectives of certain programs and activities.

The two merit review criteria are listed below. **Both** criteria are to be given **full consideration** during the review and decision-making processes; each criterion is necessary but neither, by itself, is sufficient. Therefore, proposers must fully address both criteria. (PAPPG Chapter II.D.2.d(i). contains additional information for use by proposers in development of the Project Description section of the proposal). Reviewers are strongly encouraged to review the criteria, including PAPPG Chapter II.D.2.d(i), prior to the review of a proposal.

When evaluating NSF proposals, reviewers will be asked to consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers will be asked to evaluate all proposals against two criteria:

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

The following elements should be considered in the review for both criteria:

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?

Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through the activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project. NSF values the advancement of scientific knowledge and activities that contribute to achievement of societally relevant outcomes. Such outcomes include, but are not limited to: full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); improved STEM education and educator development at any level; increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology; improved well-being of individuals in society; development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce; increased partnerships between academia, industry, and others; improved national security; increased economic competitiveness of the United States; and enhanced infrastructure for research and education.

Proposers are reminded that reviewers will also be asked to review the Data Management and Sharing Plan and the Mentoring Plan, as appropriate.

#### **Additional Solicitation Specific Review Criteria**

In addition to the standard merit review criteria, the review process will also include an assessment of the proponent organization's structure, capability, and experience in supporting the administrative needs of a science community-based organization.

The proposed approach to accomplishing each of the requirements listed in the Statement of Work (Section II.B.), outlined by the proponent in the Program Description of this Solicitation, will be specifically evaluated in terms of understanding the requirement, comprehensiveness of the approach, and likelihood of successful performance.

#### **B. Review and Selection Process**

Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation will be reviewed by Ad hoc Review and/or Panel Review.

Reviewers will be asked to evaluate proposals using two National Science Board approved merit review criteria and, if applicable, additional program specific criteria. A summary rating and accompanying narrative will generally be completed and submitted by each reviewer and/or panel. The Program Officer assigned to manage the proposal's review will consider the advice of reviewers and will formulate a recommendation.

After scientific, technical and programmatic review and consideration of appropriate factors, the NSF Program Officer recommends to the cognizant Division Director whether the proposal should be declined or recommended for award. NSF strives to be able to tell proposers whether their proposals have been declined or recommended for funding within six months. Large or particularly complex proposals or proposals from new recipients may require additional review and processing time. The time interval begins on the deadline or target date, or receipt date, whichever is later. The interval ends when the Division Director acts upon the Program Officer's recommendation.

After programmatic approval has been obtained, the proposals recommended for funding will be forwarded to the Division of Grants and Agreements or the Division of Acquisition and Cooperative Support for review of business, financial, and policy implications. After an administrative review has occurred, Grants and Agreements Officers perform the processing and issuance of a grant or other agreement. Proposers are cautioned that only a Grants and Agreements Officer may make commitments, obligations or awards on behalf of NSF or authorize the expenditure of funds. No commitment on the part of NSF should be inferred from technical or budgetary discussions with a NSF Program Officer. A

Principal Investigator or organization that makes financial or personnel commitments in the absence of a grant or cooperative agreement signed by the NSF Grants and Agreements Officer does so at their own risk.

Once an award or declination decision has been made, Principal Investigators are provided feedback about their proposals. In all cases, reviews are treated as confidential documents. Verbatim copies of reviews, excluding the names of the reviewers or any reviewer-identifying information, are sent to the Principal Investigator/Project Director by the Program Officer. In addition, the proposer will receive an explanation of the decision to award or decline funding.

## **VII. Award Administration Information**

### **A. Notification of the Award**

Notification of the award is made to *the submitting organization* by an NSF Grants and Agreements Officer. Organizations whose proposals are declined will be advised as promptly as possible by the cognizant NSF Program administering the program. Verbatim copies of reviews, not including the identity of the reviewer, will be provided automatically to the Principal Investigator. (See Section VI.B. for additional information on the review process.)

### **B. Award Conditions**

An NSF award consists of: (1) the award notice, which includes any special provisions applicable to the award and any numbered amendments thereto; (2) the budget, which indicates the amounts, by categories of expense, on which NSF has based its support (or otherwise communicates any specific approvals or disapprovals of proposed expenditures); (3) the proposal referenced in the award notice; (4) the applicable award conditions, such as Grant General Conditions (GC-1)\*; or Research Terms and Conditions\* and (5) any announcement or other NSF issuance that may be incorporated by reference in the award notice. Cooperative agreements also are administered in accordance with NSF Cooperative Agreement Financial and Administrative Terms and Conditions (CA-FATC) and the applicable Programmatic Terms and Conditions. NSF awards are electronically signed by an NSF Grants and Agreements Officer and transmitted electronically to the organization via e-mail.

\*These documents may be accessed electronically on NSF's Website at [https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/award\\_conditions.jsp?org=NSF](https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/award_conditions.jsp?org=NSF). Paper copies may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-8134 or by e-mail from [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov).

More comprehensive information on NSF Award Conditions and other important information on the administration of NSF awards is contained in the NSF *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) Chapter VII, available electronically on the NSF Website at [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=papppg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=papppg).

### **Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

#### **Build America, Buy America**

As expressed in Executive Order 14005, [Ensuring the Future is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers](#) (86 FR 7475), it is the policy of the executive branch to use terms and conditions of Federal financial assistance awards to maximize, consistent with law, the use of goods, products, and materials produced in, and services offered in, the United States.

Consistent with the requirements of the Build America, Buy America Act (Pub. L. 117-58, Division G, Title IX, Subtitle A, November 15, 2021), no funding made available through this funding opportunity may be obligated for an award unless all iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States. For additional information, visit NSF's [Build America, Buy America](#) webpage.

#### **Special Award Conditions:**

The award associated with this solicitation will be a standard or continuing grant that will fund the OOIFB Administrative Support Office in accordance with approved Annual Work Plans. The following are some of the measures NSF uses to conduct oversight:

- Review of Annual Project Reports,
- Annual Performance Reports including Metrics, and
- Annual Work Plans

### C. Reporting Requirements

For all multi-year grants (including both standard and continuing grants), the Principal Investigator must submit an annual project report to the cognizant Program Officer no later than 90 days prior to the end of the current budget period. (Some programs or awards require submission of more frequent project reports). No later than 120 days following expiration of a grant, the PI also is required to submit a final annual project report, and a project outcomes report for the general public.

Failure to provide the required annual or final annual project reports, or the project outcomes report, will delay NSF review and processing of any future funding increments as well as any pending proposals for all identified PIs and co-PIs on a given award. PIs should examine the formats of the required reports in advance to assure availability of required data.

PIs are required to use NSF's electronic project-reporting system, available through Research.gov, for preparation and submission of annual and final annual project reports. Such reports provide information on accomplishments, project participants (individual and organizational), publications, and other specific products and impacts of the project. Submission of the report via Research.gov constitutes certification by the PI that the contents of the report are accurate and complete. The project outcomes report also must be prepared and submitted using Research.gov. This report serves as a brief summary, prepared specifically for the public, of the nature and outcomes of the project. This report will be posted on the NSF website exactly as it is submitted by the PI.

More comprehensive information on NSF Reporting Requirements and other important information on the administration of NSF awards is contained in the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) Chapter VII, available electronically on the NSF Website at [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).

**In addition to the Annual Project Report, Final Annual Project Report, and Project Outcomes Report the recipient will provide the following:**

**A Draft Annual Work Plan (AWP)**, to be submitted by email to the NSF Program Officer annually a minimum of 60 days prior to October 1. The AWP will cover the upcoming operational year and will address, but not be limited to, Programmatic Goals, Metrics and Milestones, Staffing and Organization Plans, and Major Planning Activities. AWP contents will reflect the schedules, funding levels, guidelines, and formats approved by the NSF Program Officer. The approved Annual Work Plans will serve to guide OOIFB Administrative Support Office activities for each respective year during the period of performance. Timeline adjustments will be made for the first year of performance as needed.

**B Regular Informal Reports** including communication with the NSF Program Officer.

### VIII. Agency Contacts

*Please note that the program contact information is current at the time of publishing. See program website for any updates to the points of contact.*

General inquiries regarding this program should be made to:

- George Voulgaris, telephone: (703) 292-7399, email: [gvoulgar@nsf.gov](mailto:gvoulgar@nsf.gov)

For questions related to the use of NSF systems contact:

- NSF Help Desk: 1-800-381-1532
- Research.gov Help Desk e-mail: [rgov@nsf.gov](mailto:rgov@nsf.gov)

For questions relating to Grants.gov contact:

- Grants.gov Contact Center: If the Authorized Organizational Representatives (AOR) has not received a confirmation message from Grants.gov within 48 hours of submission of application, please contact via telephone: 1-800-518-4726; e-mail: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).

## IX. Other Information

The NSF website provides the most comprehensive source of information on NSF Directorates (including contact information), programs and funding opportunities. Use of this website by potential proposers is strongly encouraged. In addition, "NSF Update" is an information-delivery system designed to keep potential proposers and other interested parties apprised of new NSF funding opportunities and publications, important changes in proposal and award policies and procedures, and upcoming NSF [Grants Conferences](#). Subscribers are informed through e-mail or the user's Web browser each time new publications are issued that match their identified interests. "NSF Update" also is available on [NSF's website](#).

Grants.gov provides an additional electronic capability to search for Federal government-wide grant opportunities. NSF funding opportunities may be accessed via this mechanism. Further information on Grants.gov may be obtained at <https://www.grants.gov>.

## About The National Science Foundation

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is an independent Federal agency created by the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended (42 USC 1861-75). The Act states the purpose of the NSF is "to promote the progress of science; [and] to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare by supporting research and education in all fields of science and engineering."

NSF funds research and education in most fields of science and engineering. It does this through grants and cooperative agreements to more than 2,000 colleges, universities, K-12 school systems, businesses, informal science organizations and other research organizations throughout the US. The Foundation accounts for about one-fourth of Federal support to academic institutions for basic research.

NSF receives approximately 55,000 proposals each year for research, education and training projects, of which approximately 11,000 are funded. In addition, the Foundation receives several thousand applications for graduate and postdoctoral fellowships. The agency operates no laboratories itself but does support National Research Centers, user facilities, certain oceanographic vessels and Arctic and Antarctic research stations. The Foundation also supports cooperative research between universities and industry, US participation in international scientific and engineering efforts, and educational activities at every academic level.

*Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASSED)* provide funding for special assistance or equipment to enable persons with disabilities to work on NSF-supported projects. See the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* Chapter II.F.7 for instructions regarding preparation of these types of proposals.

The National Science Foundation has Telephonic Device for the Deaf (TDD) and Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) capabilities that enable individuals with hearing impairments to communicate with the Foundation about NSF programs, employment or general information. TDD may be accessed at (703) 292-5090 and (800) 281-8749, FIRS at (800) 877-8339.

The National Science Foundation Information Center may be reached at (703) 292-5111.

The National Science Foundation promotes and advances scientific progress in the United States by competitively awarding grants and cooperative agreements for research and education in the sciences, mathematics, and engineering.

To get the latest information about program deadlines, to download copies of NSF publications, and to access abstracts of awards, visit the NSF Website at <https://www.nsf.gov>

- **Location:** 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22314
- **For General Information** (NSF Information Center): (703) 292-5111
- **TDD (for the hearing-impaired):** (703) 292-5090
- **To Order Publications or Forms:**
  - Send an e-mail to: [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov)
  - or telephone: (703) 292-8134
- **To Locate NSF Employees:** (703) 292-5111

## Privacy Act And Public Burden Statements

The information requested on proposal forms and project reports is solicited under the authority of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended. The information on proposal forms will be used in connection with the selection of qualified proposals; and project reports submitted by proposers will be used for program evaluation and reporting within the Executive Branch and to Congress. The information requested may be disclosed to qualified reviewers and staff assistants as part of the proposal review process; to proposer institutions/grantees to provide or obtain data regarding the proposal review process, award decisions, or the administration of awards; to government contractors, experts, volunteers and researchers and educators as necessary to complete assigned work; to other government agencies or other entities needing information regarding proposers or nominees as part of a joint application review process, or in order to coordinate programs or policy; and to another Federal agency, court, or party in a court or Federal administrative proceeding if the government is a party. Information about Principal Investigators may be added to the Reviewer file and used to select potential candidates to serve as peer reviewers or advisory committee members. See [System of Record Notices, NSF-50](#), "Principal Investigator/Proposal File and Associated Records," and [NSF-51](#), "Reviewer/Proposal File and Associated Records." Submission of the information is voluntary. Failure to provide full and complete information, however, may reduce the possibility of receiving an award.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, an information collection unless it displays a valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. The OMB control number for this collection is 3145-0058. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 120 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions. Send comments regarding the burden estimate and any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to:

Suzanne H. Plimpton  
Reports Clearance Officer  
Policy Office, Division of Institution and Award Support  
Office of Budget, Finance, and Award Management  
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