

NSF 25-507: Human-Environment and Geographical Sciences Program (HEGS)

Program Solicitation

Document Information

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U.S. National Science Foundation

Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences
Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences

Full Proposal Target Date(s):

February 03, 2025

August 01, 2025

First Friday in August, Annually Thereafter

January 16, 2026

Third Friday in January, Annually Thereafter



Table Of Contents

[Summary of Program Requirements](#)

[I. Introduction](#)

[II. Program Description](#)

[III. Award Information](#)

[IV. Eligibility Information](#)

[V. Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions](#)

[A. Proposal Preparation Instructions](#)

[B. Budgetary Information](#)

- C. Due Dates
- D. Research.gov/Grants.gov Requirements
- VI. NSF Proposal Processing and Review Procedures
 - A. Merit Review Principles and Criteria
 - B. Review and Selection Process
- VII. Award Administration Information
 - A. Notification of the Award
 - B. Award Conditions
 - C. Reporting Requirements
- VIII. Agency Contacts
- IX. Other Information

Important Information And Revision Notes

1. Previous restrictions on the number of proposals that could be submitted by an individual as principal investigator or co-principal investigator have been eliminated.
2. Previous restrictions on the timeline for resubmitting a substantially revised proposal have been eliminated.
3. Previous restrictions on collaborative proposals from multiple organizations have been eliminated.
4. If researchers are unsure whether the HEGS Program is appropriate for a proposal, they are encouraged to email a brief concept outline of their project to the program email alias (HEGS-info@nsf.gov) prior to proposal submission. That outline should address the core research question or objective, relevant theoretical background, the methodological and analytical design, and the anticipated broader impacts of the project.
5. This revision provides updated guidance on the types of proposals the program typically considers. It also includes a description of and budgetary guidance for TREES (Transdisciplinary REsearch in Environmental Social Science) proposals.
6. For all inquiries related to the HEGS program, correspondents are encouraged to use the program's email alias (HEGS-info@nsf.gov), which directs emails to all program directors simultaneously.

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:

Human-Environment and Geographical Sciences Program (HEGS)

Synopsis of Program:

The objective of the Human-Environment and Geographical Sciences Program is to support basic scientific research about the nature, causes, consequences, or evolution of the spatial dimensions of human behaviors, activities, and dynamics as well as their interactions with environmental and social processes across a range of scales. Contemporary geographical research encompasses diverse research traditions and methodologies. Recognizing the breadth of the field's contributions to science, the HEGS Program welcomes proposals for empirically grounded, theoretically engaged, methodologically rigorous, and generalizable research that advances geographical and geospatial sciences.

Because the National Science Foundation's mandate is to support fundamental scientific research, the HEGS program cannot fund research that takes as its primary goal humanistic interpretations or findings that are not generalizable or reproducible. HEGS welcomes proposals that utilize quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods in novel ways. However, a proposal that applies geographical or geospatial methods to a geographic problem without proposing how that problem provides an opportunity to make a theory-testing or theory-expanding contribution to geographical science, broadly defined, will be returned without review. HEGS supported projects are expected to yield results that will enhance, expand, and transform fundamental geographical theory and geospatial methods and that will have broader impacts that benefit society.

Generally, successful HEGS proposals should describe clear and detailed plans for data collection (including sample selection if appropriate), justification for proposed methods, plans for data analysis, attention to confounding variables, and efforts to address biases (e.g., confirmatory biases, selection biases, etc.). Competitive HEGS proposals should substantiate the validity of findings and generalizability to broader contexts.

It should be noted that HEGS is situated in the Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences Division of the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate at NSF. Therefore, it is critical that research projects submitted to the HEGS program illustrate how the proposed research questions engage human dimensions that are relevant and important to people and societies.

A proposal that fails to be responsive to these program expectations will be returned without review.

Broadening Participation In STEM

NSF recognizes the unique lived experiences of individuals from communities that are underrepresented and/or under-served in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and the barriers to inclusion and access to STEM education and careers. NSF highly encourages the leadership, partnership, and contributions in all NSF opportunities of individuals who are members of such communities supported by NSF. This includes leading and designing STEM research and education proposals for funding; serving as peer reviewers, advisory committee members, and/or committee of visitor members; and serving as NSF leadership, program, and/or administrative staff. NSF also highly encourages demographically diverse institutions of higher education (IHEs) to lead, partner, and contribute to NSF opportunities on behalf of their research and education communities. NSF expects that all individuals, including those who are members of groups that are underrepresented and/or under-served in STEM, are treated equitably and inclusively in the Foundation's proposal and award process.

NSF encourages IHEs that enroll, educate, graduate, and employ individuals who are members of groups underrepresented and/or under-served in STEM education programs and careers to lead, partner, and contribute to NSF opportunities, including leading and designing STEM research and education proposals for funding. Such IHEs include, but may not be limited to, community colleges and two-year institutions, mission-based institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), women's colleges, and institutions that primarily serve persons with disabilities, as well as institutions defined by enrollment such as Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions (PUIs), Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

"Broadening participation in STEM" is the comprehensive phrase used by NSF to refer to the Foundation's goal of increasing the representation and diversity of individuals, organizations, and geographic regions that contribute to STEM

teaching, research, and innovation. To broaden participation in STEM, it is necessary to address issues of equity, inclusion, and access in STEM education, training, and careers. Whereas all NSF programs might support broadening participation components, some programs primarily focus on supporting broadening participation research and projects. Examples can be found on the NSF [Broadening Participation in STEM](#) website.

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.

- Tom Evans, Program Director, SBE/BCS, telephone: (703) 292-4891, email: tevans@nsf.gov
- Jeremy Koster, telephone: (703) 292-8740, email: jkoster@nsf.gov
- May Yuan, Program Director, telephone: (703) 292-2206, email: mayuan@nsf.gov
- Cori J. Jacildone, Business Operations Specialist, telephone: (703) 292-8740, email: cjacildo@nsf.gov

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

- 47.075 --- Social Behavioral and Economic Sciences

Award Information

Anticipated Type of Award: Standard Grant or Continuing Grant

Estimated Number of Awards: 15 to 25

HEGS generally recommends a total of 15 to 25 senior research awards; 0 to 2 faculty early-career development (CAREER) awards; 0 to 3 awards to support conferences; 0 to 1 research coordination network (RCN) awards.

Anticipated Funding Amount: \$7,000,000

Pending the availability of funds and quality of proposals.

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 sub-awards 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.
- For-profit organizations: U.S.-based commercial organizations, including small businesses, with strong capabilities in scientific or engineering research or education and a passion for innovation.
- State and Local Governments
- Tribal Nations: An American Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community that the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges as a federally recognized tribe

pursuant to the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994, 25 U.S.C. §§ 5130-5131.

Who May Serve as PI:

There are no restrictions or limits.

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:

There are no restrictions or limits.

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

There are no restrictions or limits.

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.
 - 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).

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 Target Date(s):**

February 03, 2025

August 01, 2025

First Friday in August, Annually Thereafter

January 16, 2026

Third Friday in January, Annually Thereafter

Proposal Review Information Criteria

Merit Review Criteria:

National Science Board approved criteria apply.

Award Administration Information**Award Conditions:**

Standard NSF award conditions apply.

Reporting Requirements:

Standard NSF reporting requirements apply.

I. Introduction

The objective of the Human-Environment and Geographical Sciences program is to support basic scientific research about the nature, causes, consequences, or evolution of the spatial dimensions of human behaviors, activities, and dynamics as well as their interactions with environmental and social processes across a range of scales. Contemporary geographical research encompasses diverse research traditions and methodologies. Recognizing the breadth of the field's contributions to science, the HEGS program welcomes proposals for empirically grounded, theoretically engaged, methodologically rigorous, and generalizable research that advances geographical and geospatial sciences.

To advance these priorities, the HEGS Program supports multiple types of proposals. This solicitation provides additional guidance on the following proposal categories:

- Senior Research Proposals
- Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program Proposals
- Research Coordination Networks (RCN)
- Proposals for conferences and research community development activities
- Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) and Research Experiences for Graduate Students (REG) Supplemental Funding Requests
- Transdisciplinary REsearch in Environmental Social Science (TREES)

The above list encompasses the proposal categories that are most commonly submitted to the HEGS program. In some cases, the program also administers the merit review process of proposals submitted in response to other solicitations, including Research in Undergraduate Institution (RUI) proposals. Principal investigators may contact the program officers for guidance on which proposal type might align best with their research objectives.

The HEGS program may also consider proposals for principal investigators' methodological training or for pilot studies and other preliminary research that facilitate subsequent efforts. When these proposals include budget requests less than \$100,000, expedited review processes may be possible. These proposals are submitted via standard mechanisms (i.e., as senior research proposals that follow programmatic deadlines for submissions), and the program may elect to initiate either internal or external merit review processes for these proposals.

Supplements to current awards are also possible, contingent on the availability of programmatic funding. There are two broad categories for supplemental funding requests submitted to HEGS. First, as outlined in the PAPPG, small amounts of supplemental funding and up to six months of additional support may be requested to assure adequate completion of the original scope of work. Second, supplements may be requested to realize broader impacts, particularly for the goal of broadening participation in science that could not be anticipated when the proposal was submitted. The HEGS program welcomes supplemental funding requests for Research Opportunity Awards (ROA) to support meritorious research activities by faculty members at predominantly undergraduate institutions. The program also welcomes requests to support student involvement in research, including Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU). The students do not need to be enrolled at the principal investigator's institution, and requests that broaden participation in science are

particularly encouraged. For all supplemental funding inquiries, principal investigators should consult with HEGS program officers before submitting a formal request.

II. Program Description

To advance programmatic objectives, the HEGS program most commonly reviews the following types of proposals. The program also welcomes resubmissions of previously declined proposals, though a proposal that has not been substantially revised will be returned without review as per the PAPPG. Also, as outlined in the PAPPG, proposal submissions will not be accepted if they duplicate or substantially resemble a proposal that is already under consideration by NSF from the same submitter.

Senior Research Proposals

The most common proposal type, the "senior" designation encompasses researchers who have a PhD or equivalent qualifications sufficient to enable independent research. A proposed project may include either a single researcher or a research team comprising a principal investigator along with co-principal investigators, other senior/key personnel, post-doctoral researchers and other personnel (including specialists from other disciplines and other countries) as needed for the scope of the research. Proposals may request up to 48 months of funding. In general, budget requests from the HEGS program are typically, but not exclusively, in the range of \$100,000 to \$500,000, inclusive of indirect costs. Budgets must be commensurate with proposed activities and must directly support the objectives of the research. Budget requests are reviewed carefully at all stages of the evaluation process, and proposals with budgets that are justified and appropriate to the scope of the project are prioritized. Submitters of proposals are encouraged to consult the NSF awards database for perspective on the range of budget requests that characterize the program. Awards that are co-funded by other NSF programs may depart from standard budgetary guidelines; co-reviewing programs may be requested by principal investigators at the time of submission.

Faculty Early Career Development Program (CAREER) Proposals

The HEGS program welcomes CAREER proposals from early-career researchers who meet the eligibility requirements of the NSF-wide CAREER program. Proposals should articulate the scientific objectives of the project and anticipated products while also describing how an award will set a trajectory for continued, related research after the funded activities have concluded. As noted in the CAREER solicitation, proposals must also include an educational component, and the HEGS program suggests that this component should creatively encompass more than conventional curricular development and pedagogy. Budget requests must range between a minimum of \$400,000 and a maximum of \$450,000.

Research Coordination Networks (RCN)

Research Coordination Networks are an NSF-wide program, designed to catalyze new collaborations, typically with an interdisciplinary orientation. Proposals to the HEGS program must substantiate the novelty of the collaboration and the ways in which the funded activities will result in lasting impacts on the proposed research themes. The HEGS program suggests the involvement of diverse collaborators in multiple dimensions, including career stage, geographic, institutional, and disciplinary diversity. Proposed activities should encompass infrastructural investments, broadly defined, which will facilitate future collaborative opportunities. Proposals that request support primarily for workshops and meetings should instead be submitted as conference proposals. The maximum budget request for RCN proposals submitted to HEGS is \$350,000.

Conference Proposals

The HEGS program supports conferences that are thematically organized around HEGS research topics. Although conference proposals may be submitted at any time, proposals should typically be submitted at least 12 months in advance of the proposed event, and typically proposals should prioritize the active involvement of early-career researchers and groups that are underrepresented in the field. Conference proposals should follow the guidelines in the PAPPG. In general, the maximum budget request is \$50,000, though principal investigators may communicate with program officers in exceptional circumstances where moderately larger budgets may be justifiable. Previous funding for a conference does not assure continuous funding.

Transdisciplinary REsearch in Environmental Social Science (TREES) proposals

The science of socio-environmental systems involves the integration of social science and environmental science, but TREES projects must specifically result in advances in social and behavioral sciences to understand the complex interactions between people and the environment. TREES projects should pose research questions that will advance theory both in the science of socio-environmental systems and basic human-environmental and geographical sciences (HEGS). TREES proposals that are oriented toward contributions to anthropological science may be submitted to the Cultural Anthropology Program.

For TREES proposals, transdisciplinary research teams are encouraged to incorporate diverse disciplinary perspectives that are necessary for an integrated science of social and environmental systems. Proposals that include plans for multi-method analysis should demonstrate how findings will be synthesized across different approaches.

The TREES track is open to a broad range of research questions and methodological approaches. Researchers submitting to this track are encouraged to consider innovative research designs that integrate complementary sources of data and analytical approaches, potentially at multiple spatial, temporal, or organizational scales of analysis.

The duration of funded TREES awards is generally expected to be three or four years. Requested budgets should be commensurate with the proposed activities and will typically not exceed an average range of \$200,000 to \$250,000 per year across the requested award duration.

TREES proposals will be evaluated by review panels composed of interdisciplinary scholars with diverse expertise in social, behavioral, and environmental sciences.

III. Award Information

Anticipated Type of Award: Standard Grant or Continuing Grant

The number and type of awards is variable from year to year. Browsing the awards database for projects funded through this program provides an indication of the range of awards that are typically made by the HEGS program.

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 sub-awards 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.
- For-profit organizations: U.S.-based commercial organizations, including small businesses, with strong capabilities in scientific or engineering research or education and a passion for innovation.
- State and Local Governments
- Tribal Nations: An American Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community that the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges as a federally recognized tribe pursuant to the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994, 25 U.S.C. §§ 5130-5131.

Who May Serve as PI:

There are no restrictions or limits.

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:

There are no restrictions or limits.

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

There are no restrictions or limits.

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. 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. 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). 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.

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.

For all proposal types, proposers may include (as applicable or where required):

Single copy (NSF-use only) documents:

- List of suggested reviewers or reviewers not to include. This document is optional, but the HEGS program strongly encourages principal investigators to suggest expert reviewers. These suggestions should include at least minimal contact information, such as institution and email address. For the list of reviewers not to include, there is no need to provide an explanation. These suggestions are visible only to NSF program officers and staff.

TREES Proposals

For TREES proposals, a management plan should be included in the Project Description demonstrating how research team members will coordinate activities through the course of a project. Proposals should clarify which team members are responsible for the implementation of specific project activities, either in the management plan or elsewhere in the project description. The proposal title should begin with the prefix "TREES:".

B. Budgetary Information

Cost Sharing:

Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.

C. Due Dates

- **Full Proposal Target Date(s):**

February 03, 2025

August 01, 2025

First Friday in August, Annually Thereafter

January 16, 2026

Third Friday in January, Annually Thereafter

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/ProposalPreparation For Research.gov user support, call the Research.gov Help Desk at 1-800-381-1532 or e-mail 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 web page: <https://www.grants.gov/applicants>. 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. 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 acknowledgment 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/.

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.

B. Review and Selection Process

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

HEGS will use panel reviews, ad hoc reviews, and / or internal reviews.

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)*; 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. Paper copies may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-8134 or by e-mail from 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=pappg.

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 infrastructure projects under 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](#) web page.

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.

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:

- Tom Evans, Program Director, SBE/BCS, telephone: (703) 292-4891, email: tevens@nsf.gov
- Jeremy Koster, telephone: (703) 292-8740, email: jkoster@nsf.gov
- May Yuan, Program Director, telephone: (703) 292-2206, email: mayuan@nsf.gov
- Cori J. Jacildone, Business Operations Specialist, telephone: (703) 292-8740, email: cjacildo@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

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.

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>.

Related Programs:

The HEGS-DDRI program reviews Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement proposals.

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 (FASED) 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
 - 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/recipients 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
National Science Foundation
Alexandria, VA 22314

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