



National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230

NSF 13-072

Dear Colleague Letter: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Science Across Virtual Institutes (SAVI)

Date: March 20, 2013

1. What is SAVI, Science Across Virtual Institutes?
2. How does SAVI differ from other international collaborative activities supported across NSF?
3. Who is eligible to serve as a SAVI PI?
4. How and when may SAVI support be requested?
5. How will NSF review requests for SAVI support?
6. What kinds of activities and costs are eligible?
7. Is there a maximum budget request?
8. Are multiple U.S. institutions eligible to partner via one SAVI?
9. What areas of research and education are appropriate?
10. Is a data management plan required for a SAVI?
11. Is a postdoctoral mentoring plan required for a SAVI?
12. Who owns the intellectual property resulting from a SAVI award?
13. Can a faculty member from an international partner institution serve as a co-PI on a SAVI proposal?
14. What documentation should be included with SAVI proposals to demonstrate commitment of international partners to the proposed activities?
15. What is the role the NSF Office of International Science and Engineering (OISE) in SAVI-related activities?
16. Is international matching funding required?

1. What is SAVI, Science Across Virtual Institutes?

SAVI is a mechanism to facilitate collaboration among teams of NSF-supported U.S. scientists and engineers and their international partners who have complementary strengths and common interests and who wish to form virtual institutes that foster enhanced research collaboration; data sharing; networking; and technical exchanges of students, post docs, and junior faculty across borders. SAVIs are to serve as hubs for focused, innovative research and education activities.

2. How does SAVI differ from other international collaborative activities supported across NSF?

While many of the specific activities envisioned for SAVI could be supported by existing NSF programs, SAVI provides a platform for teams of NSF-funded investigators to network with their partners abroad and to leverage counterpart funding across a common topic of interest. SAVI does not replace existing NSF programs that encourage collaboration between U.S. PIs and their international partners, nor is SAVI intended to support collaboration between individual PIs. PIs

should consider these programs to determine the best fit for the level of activity they are planning. Examples of such programs include:

Research Coordination Networks: http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=11691

Catalyzing New International Collaborations:

http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=12815&org=IIA

3. Who is eligible to serve as a SAVI PI?

Teams of NSF-funded investigators in the U.S. are eligible to apply. A SAVI team may be comprised of members from an existing NSF-funded center/institute or a group of already funded individual investigators with complementary research and education strengths and objectives, who can justify the creation of a virtual center or institute. A single individual must be identified as the SAVI PI for the team, and his/her institution must serve as the U.S. lead institution responsible for management of a SAVI award. In addition to the SAVI PI, a SAVI Coordinator may be designated. The SAVI PI may choose to serve as both the PI and the Coordinator; or, a second individual may be the designated Coordinator for the SAVI.

4. How and when may SAVI support be requested?

SAVI is not a stand-alone program. SAVI proposals may be prepared as a new proposal to link the research and education efforts of multiple NSF-funded PIs, as a supplement to an existing NSF award for this purpose, or as a component of a larger new proposal submitted to an NSF disciplinary program. For additional guidance, potential proposers should contact the appropriate Directorate or Office representative http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/savi/contacts.jsp

5. How will NSF review requests for SAVI support?

Each NSF Directorate and Office will review and process SAVI proposals in a manner consistent with NSF's established merit review policies and procedures (<http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/grants.jsp>).

6. What kinds of activities and costs are eligible?

As described in the SAVI Dear Colleague Letter [NSF 13-073](#), NSF will consider requests for support of mutually beneficial activities that are designed to meet the SAVI objectives of synergy and accelerated progress, through international cooperation.

Examples of cooperative activities which can be accomplished virtually or physically include, but are not limited to, collaborative research and education activities; collaborative team meetings; focused workshops, advanced study institutes; seminars; college-level courses; co-mentoring of graduate students and postdocs; longer-term research exchanges for junior scientists; and focused international research experiences for students, post-doctoral fellows, and junior faculty.

7. Is there a maximum budget request?

Awards are expected to vary from \$50,000 to \$400,000 per year for up to five years. Recommended funding will depend upon the nature of the proposed virtual institute and the level of existing funds for SAVI-relevant activities that are already supported by active grants to U.S. SAVI team awardees. SAVI funding should be considered as the supplemental resources necessary to realize a collaborative platform for the intended synergy rather than as a primary source of research funding.

8. Are multiple institutions eligible to partner via one SAVI?

Yes. One of the objectives of SAVI is to encourage collaboration among NSF-funded investigators who work closely in related fields and topics. SAVI encourages teams to form a "virtual" institute and to partner with international counterpart teams who have secured their own funding.

At the time of proposal submission, the U.S. team's international partners and their affiliated institutions should be identified. SAVI awards may be bi-lateral or multilateral. International partners are expected to secure their own funding via appropriate funding organizations in their country or region.

9. What areas of research and education are appropriate?

NSF will entertain SAVI proposals in any areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) supported by the Foundation, including research in education and social, behavioral, and economic sciences.

10. Is a data management plan required for a SAVI?

NSF proposals must describe plans for data management and sharing of the products of research, or assert the absence of the need for such plans. The Data Management Plan will be reviewed as part of the intellectual merit or broader impacts of the SAVI proposal, or both, as appropriate. More information can be found in the [Grant Proposal Guide Chapter II.C.2.j](#) of the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide*.

11. Is a postdoctoral mentoring plan required for a SAVI?

NSF proposals must describe plans for postdoctoral mentoring if the proposal includes support for postdoctoral scientists. The Post-Doctoral Mentoring Plan will be reviewed as part of the intellectual merit or broader impacts of the SAVI proposal, or both, as appropriate. More information can be found in the [Grant Proposal Guide Chapter II.C.2.j](#) of the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide*.

12. Who owns the intellectual property resulting from a SAVI award?

Inventions made during NSF-assisted research are governed by the Foundation's standard Patent Rights clause which is invoked by article 21 of NSF's Grant General Conditions and published at 45 CFR section 650.4. It is recommended that U.S. institutions consider and establish policies for intellectual property rights with their international partners as early as possible in project development for cooperative activities.

13. Can a faculty member from an international partner institution serve as a co-PI on a SAVI proposal?

No, all SAVI co-PIs must be from the SAVI's U.S. partner institutions. Key participants in other countries should be listed as international collaborators in the proposal, not as PIs or co-PIs or other senior project personnel.

14. What documentation should be included with SAVI proposals to demonstrate commitment of international partners to the proposed activities?

International partners are expected to secure their own funding via appropriate funding organizations in their country or region. At the time of proposal submission, the U.S. team's international partners and their affiliated institutions should be identified. SAVI proposals should

describe the existence and level of maturity of the integral international partnership. Institutional letters of commitment and formatted biographical sketches for lead international collaborators should be included with the proposal as supplemental documentation to demonstrate commitment.

15. What is the role of the NSF Office of International and Integrative Activities (OIIA) in SAVI-related activities?

OIIA will coordinate and provide co-funding for SAVI activities across the Foundation in partnership with other NSF Offices and Directorates. However, OIIA will not accept SAVI proposals directly. All SAVI proposals should be submitted to the existing discipline or interdisciplinary program that best fits the proposed research subject. Each NSF program will process SAVI proposals in a manner consistent with its established proposal review practices.

16. Is international matching funding required?

There is no set formula for matched funding.

Proposers are reminded that inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited. In this context, international partners, not NSF, should provide funding for their own participation in SAVI international collaborations. Furthermore, SAVI activities should be designed to derive mutual benefit and encourage wide distribution of the resulting materials, data, analyses, and publications within the partner countries as well as in the U.S.

NSF expects to fund only the U.S. costs of the SAVI collaboration. Extraordinary circumstances may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Such circumstances may include required access to unique expertise, facilities, or data resources that are not generally available to U.S. investigators but are deemed essential to the success of the proposed SAVI and which cannot be funded from sources in the region or country.

For student participants, generally the country (U.S. or foreign) sending the students is expected to pay for their travel to and expenses in the receiving country. NSF may consider arrangements for exchanges of students wherein the hosting institution provides for living expenses on a reciprocal basis.