



National Science Foundation
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NSF 13-103

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for NSF 13-555, EHR Core Research (ECR)

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1. **NSF has released a program announcement for the EHR Core Research (ECR) program. What is the difference between a program announcement and a program solicitation?**

Program announcements and program solicitations are both used by NSF to communicate opportunities for research and education support, as well as to generate proposals. Program announcements utilize the generic eligibility and proposal preparation guidelines specified in the Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) and incorporate the National Science Board (NSB) approved merit review criteria. Program solicitations are typically more focused than program announcements, and normally apply for a limited period of time. For further details, see http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_1.jsp#IC

2. **Do I need to submit my proposal by the target date?**

A target date is a date after which proposals will still be accepted, although they may miss a particular panel meeting. In addition, we encourage you to submit your proposal prior to the target date as this may allow for earlier review.

3. Will ECR accept CAREER proposals?

Yes, CAREER proposals within the ECR areas will be accepted. Please see the deadline information for CAREER proposals at http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503214

4. What are you looking for in capacity-building proposals?

Capacity-building proposals should support any groundwork necessary for advancing research within the four core areas. They might include support for workshops, sandpits, or exploratory/consensus studies, for example.

5. Do I need to be an education researcher to be a PI or co-PI on an ECR project?

No, but education research expertise, as well as content area expertise, should be represented in the project team.

6. Can the same PI apply to both ECR and other appropriate EHR programs?

Yes.

7. Can a PI submit the same proposal to two programs (such as ECR and REAL) at the same time?

No.

8. How many ECR awards of each type (Core Research and Capacity Building) will be made?

We estimate that a total of 28 ECR awards may be made for the fiscal year 2013 competition. The number of each type of award will be based on the available funds and the number of quality proposals received in each category.

9. Can ECR proposals include more than one of the core areas?

Yes. ECR proposals can focus on one of the four core areas or on multiple core areas.

10. Should I explicitly identify the ECR area(s) into which my proposal fits?

Yes, it would be beneficial to state the primary ECR area(s) on which your proposal focuses in both the project summary and the project description.

11. What areas of the STEM workforce does ECR include?

Any STEM workforce issue can be the focus of an ECR workforce research proposal.

12. What education levels may be foci of ECR proposals?

All formal education levels, including preK-12, undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral, as well as informal education for all age levels, including adults.

13. What learning environments may be foci of ECR proposals?

All formal and informal learning environments, including internship, training environments, and research environments, can be foci of ECR proposals.

14. Can ECR proposals include a development component (such as curriculum development or software development)?

ECR's focus is on foundational research issues. If the foundational research a PI proposes requires development to conduct the research, this is perfectly acceptable. However, the ECR program's focus is on research, not development.

15. Does an ECR proposal need to include project evaluation?

Yes. One of the five merit review elements asks reviewers to consider: "*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?*" Thus, an ECR proposal should include plans for providing evidence that the project activities appropriately address the research questions posed. Project evaluation can be accomplished by a variety of mechanisms, for example, by employing an advisory board or external evaluator to review the research design and implementation, and provide evidence that the project is effectively addressing its research questions. External advice is valuable to determine both whether or not the project is on track to meet its goals (through formative evaluation) and the impact and outcomes of the project (through summative evaluation).

16. Do I need to have Institutional Review Board (IRB) human subjects approval before I submit the proposal?

Due to the timing, to receive an award based on the fiscal year 2013 competition (target date July 12, 2013), you should have human subjects approval before submitting the proposal. For future competitions, if the project involves human subjects, the proposal Cover Sheet should at least indicate that IRB approval is pending. While the proposal can be reviewed without IRB approval, the project cannot be funded without certification of the final IRB determination.

17. Is the ECR program replacing other EHR programs?

No, it is not the intent for ECR to replace other programs.

18. What are the differences between other EHR programs and ECR?

ECR is the first directorate-wide effort to support foundational STEM education research across every division of EHR. Consequently, ECR is a broad research program with no limits with respect to the STEM learners' age, the STEM content to be learned, or the STEM learning environment/setting. ECR's four core areas are directorate-wide areas of emphasis. They include research on STEM learning, STEM learning environments, broadening participation in STEM, and the STEM workforce. The directorate-wide focus of ECR on this set of foundational research areas is intended to increase the accumulation and aggregation of research evidence over time.