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NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 17-050

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program for Submission in Years 2017 - 2019

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Proposals must be submitted via FastLane or Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m., submitter's local time, to the applicable deadline date below:

Directorate	2017 Due Dates	2018 Due Dates	2019 Due Dates
BIO, CISE, EHR	July 19, 2017	July 18, 2018	July 17, 2019
ENG	July 20, 2017	July 19, 2018	July 18, 2019
GEO, MPS, SBE	July 21, 2017	July 20, 2018	July 19, 2019

The following set of questions and answers refer to frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the CAREER Program Solicitation. They are not intended to be a modification of the Program Solicitation. If there are any inconsistencies between the CAREER Program Solicitation and these FAQs, the information in the Program Solicitation prevails.

Before preparing CAREER proposals please read the CAREER solicitation and refer to the general information about NSF proposal submission including the **Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG)** submission guidelines at: https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=papp; **FastLane FAQ's** can be found at: https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/NSFHelp/flashhelp/fastlane/FastLane_Help/fastlane_help.htm#fastlane_faqs_introduction.htm; and the **NSF Guide to Programs** (for descriptions of NSF's research-supporting programs) at https://www.nsf.gov/funding/browse_all_funding.jsp.

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3. What happens if my appointment changes from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor (either tenure-track or tenured) after I submit my CAREER proposal?
4. The CAREER Program Solicitation requires that I hold a doctoral degree by the proposal submission deadline. I have defended my thesis but will not have my diploma by the submission deadline. May I apply to the CAREER Program this year?
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6. I received my Doctorate six years ago. Am I eligible to apply?
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9. Am I eligible if I work at a 2-year college or a community college?
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28. I just noticed a major problem with my CAREER proposal. My CAREER deadline has not passed so can I fix the problem?
29. Do I submit a proposal to just CAREER or to a particular program at NSF and how do I decide to which program I should submit my CAREER proposal?

C. ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAREER AWARDS

30. When will I be notified of the final decision on my CAREER proposal?

D. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

31. Are the reporting requirements for CAREER awards the same as for other NSF awards?
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33. What happens to my CAREER award if I leave my academic appointment for a position that is tenured, tenure-track, or tenure-track-equivalent at a CAREER-eligible institution?
34. What happens to my CAREER award if I leave my academic appointment for a position that is neither tenured, tenure-track, nor tenure-track-equivalent; or for a position at a new organization that is not CAREER-eligible?
35. What happens to my CAREER award if I am unable to continue the project?

A. ELIGIBILITY

1. **Whom should I contact to discuss my ideas for a CAREER proposal to be sure NSF supports the topic area?**

Your primary contact is a Program Officer in a division or program that is closest to your area of research. The NSF website provides information about the NSF programs. Consult the Program Areas section of the NSF Find Funding web page (<https://www.nsf.gov/funding/>) and select the appropriate NSF Division/Office to review the associated Divisions, Programs, and Program Descriptions. The NSF staff directory (<https://www.nsf.gov/staff/>) provides contact information for Program Officers, by name and by organization. In addition, a list of CAREER Contacts is provided at: <https://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/career/contacts.jsp>.

2. **The CAREER Program Solicitation states that a proposer must have the title of assistant professor or equivalent. I am non-tenured but hold the title of associate professor. May I apply?**

No. An associate professor (with or without tenure) is not eligible to apply for a CAREER award.

3. **What happens if my appointment changes from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor (either tenure-track or tenured) before October 1 after I submit my CAREER proposal?**

You should not submit a CAREER proposal if you anticipate that your title will change to Associate Professor on or before the October 1st following the proposal submission deadline.

4. **The CAREER Program Solicitation requires that I hold a doctoral degree by the proposal submission deadline. I have defended my thesis but will not have my diploma by the submission deadline. May I apply to the CAREER Program this year?**

No. You are not eligible unless you receive the official, dated diploma, by the proposal deadline.

5. I held a tenured position at my former organization, but I am not in a tenured position now. Am I eligible to apply?

Yes, if you satisfy all of the eligibility criteria. Previous employment in a tenured position does not affect eligibility.

6. I received my Doctorate six years ago. Am I eligible to apply?

Yes, if you satisfy all the eligibility criteria. CAREER eligibility is not limited by time from degree or years in a tenure track appointment.

7. I am not a U.S. Permanent Resident or U.S. Citizen or U.S. National. Can I apply to the CAREER Program?

Yes. You may apply if you are employed at an eligible U.S. organization and meet the other CAREER eligibility requirements. However, you will not be eligible for a PECASE award.

8. Am I eligible to apply if I work at a non-degree-granting organization such as a museum, observatory, or research lab?

Yes, but you must have a tenure-track or tenure-track-equivalent appointment, substantial research and educational responsibilities as part of your employment, and meet all other CAREER eligibility requirements. The non-degree granting organization (museum, observatory or research lab) must be non-profit and located in the United States.

9. Am I eligible if I work at a 2-year college or a community college?

Yes, as long as your appointment meets the CAREER eligibility requirements.

10. I am a new faculty member at an institution that qualifies as an undergraduate institution under the provisions of the Research in Undergraduate Institutions (RUI) Program Solicitation. Is it possible to apply for the CAREER Program under the RUI provisions?

No. You must choose between submitting a proposal to the RUI or to the CAREER program solicitation. You may not include the additional Certificate of RUI Eligibility or the RUI Impact Statement on a CAREER proposal.

11. If I have received funds from the Federal Government to perform research, may I still apply for a CAREER award?

Yes. You may submit a CAREER proposal if you have NSF or other Federal awards. What you propose to do as part of your CAREER proposal should not overlap what you have been funded to do by NSF or any other agency. You may not submit a CAREER proposal if you already have received a CAREER award.

12. Since I can participate in at most three CAREER competitions, when is the best time to apply?

The most important consideration is whether you are ready to write a proposal with an innovative research idea, and an education plan, aligned with the mission of your department or organization. You might discuss your readiness and your career development to date with your Department Chair or an NSF Program Officer.

B. PROPOSAL PREPARATION, BUDGET PREPARATION, AND SUBMISSION

B.1. Proposal Preparation

13. What are common reasons for which CAREER proposals are returned without review?

The following are common reasons why proposals are found to be non-compliant with the CAREER Solicitation:

- A co-principal investigator is listed on the cover page
- Departmental Letter is missing
- All submitted CAREER proposals should follow the guidelines in the CAREER program solicitation and the NSF PAPPG.

14. I have two possible projects. May I submit two CAREER proposals?

No. You may submit only one CAREER proposal per year.

15. May I submit a CAREER proposal and a regular research proposal on a similar topic to NSF at the same time?

The NSF PAPPG states, "The same work/proposal cannot be funded twice. If the proposer envisions review by multiple programs, more than one program may be designated on the Cover Sheet. The submission of duplicate or substantially similar proposals concurrently for review by more than one program without prior NSF approval will result in the return of the redundant proposals."

If you are planning to submit a CAREER proposal and another proposal to the same NSF program, please contact the disciplinary Program Officer to discuss your individual case.

16. May I submit a CAREER proposal and another proposal on a different topic to NSF in the same year?

Yes, but only if the research is substantially different. NSF may return without review a second proposal on a closely related research topic.

17. What are the expectations for the level of activities in the education component?

Your plans should reflect your own disciplinary and educational interests and goals, as well as the interests and needs of your organization. While excellence in both research and education is expected, activity of an intensity that leads to an unreasonable workload is not. For instance, teaching additional courses or taking on additional duties is not expected. What is expected is a well-argued and specific proposal for activities over a 5-year period that will build a firm foundation for a lifetime of integrated contributions to research and education. The research and educational activities do not need to be addressed separately if the relationship between the two is such that the presentation of the integrated project is better served by interspersing the two throughout the Project Description.

18. What documentation should I submit to show any collaborative efforts?

Specific details of any proposed collaborations should be described in the Project Description and the Facilities, Equipment, and other Resources sections of the proposal. In addition, you may submit letters of collaboration (limited to the single-sentence format provided in the program solicitation) that simply state intent to collaborate and/or commit resources as detailed in the proposal.

Scan the signed and dated letter(s) into the Supplementary Documents section, and place them after the departmental letter. Do not submit any other documentation for the collaborators, such as biographical sketches, appendices, or other NSF forms. You will not be allowed to submit these letters after the submission deadline, so plan in advance.

Letters of recommendation or other statements of support for the project are not permitted.

19. I have additional information posted on my website I would like the reviewers to see. May I refer readers to my web site within the Project Description?

PIs are cautioned that the Project Description must be self-contained and that URLs must not be used because: 1) the information could circumvent page limitations; 2) the reviewers are under no obligation to view the sites; and 3) the sites could be altered or deleted between the time of submission and the time of review. Brevity will assist reviewers and Foundation staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description (including Results from Prior NSF Support, which is limited to five pages) may not exceed 15 pages. Visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs, and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limitation.

20. I would like to be considered for a PECASE award. What is the process?

Please note that individuals cannot apply for a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE). Rather, these awards are initiated by participating federal agencies. At NSF, up to 20 nominees for this award are selected each year from among recent CAREER awardees deemed most likely to become the leaders of academic research and education for the twenty-first century. The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) makes the final selection and announcement of the awardees.

In addition to meeting the CAREER eligibility requirements, PECASE nominees must be U.S. citizens, U.S. Nationals, or U.S. Permanent Residents. During the nomination process, OSTP will request proof of citizenship or permanent residency status and other information necessary for a security clearance from a potential list of nominees. PECASE awards at NSF are honorary and carry no additional funding.

21. If I held an NSF postdoctoral fellowship, do I need to include a "Results from Prior Support" section?

You must include a "Results from Prior Support" section whenever you have served as a PI or co-PI on any NSF grant with a start date in the past five years. This includes postdoctoral fellowships, grants in equipment programs such as Major Research Instrumentation, and educational grants. If you have received more than one prior award (excluding amendments), you need only report on the award that is most closely related to the CAREER proposal. (See the PAPPG for the required information.)

B.2. Budget Preparation

22. What is an appropriate level of funding to request?

The CAREER budget request should reflect the scope of the research and education plans, and the practices within your discipline. The **minimum** CAREER award size is expected to be \$400,000, including indirect cost or overhead, for a 5- year period, except in the Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO), the Directorate for Engineering (ENG), and the Office of Polar Programs (PLR). CAREER awards in BIO, ENG, or PLR are expected to be a minimum of

\$500,000 (approximately \$100,000 per year) for the 5-year duration. There is no maximum award size, but be realistic about your budget expectations and what has been funded before by the Program considering your proposal. The average CAREER award size varies across NSF. Some Directorates/Divisions/Programs usually fund CAREER awards closer to the minimum, while some others have a higher average award size. Before preparing the budget for your CAREER proposal, you are strongly encouraged to contact your disciplinary Program Officer or your Division CAREER contact to discuss your planned request.

23. May I request academic year salary on a CAREER proposal?

A PI who has heavy teaching responsibilities or whose proposed activities may involve a limited period of fieldwork or other extraordinary career-development activity in research or education may be justified in requesting academic year salary support on their budgets. Before including any academic year salary support on your CAREER budget you should contact your disciplinary Program Officer to discuss your individual case.

24. May I request funds to support the education component of my CAREER proposal?

Yes. You may request adequate resources to carry out your proposed educational activities. If resources are required, either the proposal budget or the project description should indicate how this aspect of the program would be funded. If working with K-12 education, consult teachers or those working with local teachers regarding teacher stipends and substitute pay. You may also budget for appropriate materials, participant stipends and travel, and the like.

B.3 Proposal Submission

25. What if my proposal is submitted after my submission deadline?

A CAREER proposal must be submitted in FastLane or Grants.gov by your organization before 5:00 p.m. your local time on or before the deadline of the Directorate or Office that you have selected. If you pick more than one program in Directorate or Offices with different due dates, the deadline for the primary organization (Directorate/Office) will apply. NSF Program Officers are not authorized to grant extensions of the CAREER deadlines.

26. My proposal seems to fit in two different programs. What should I do to indicate which Program(s) I want to consider my proposal?

You may designate more than one disciplinary program in the cover sheet if you think two or more programs should jointly review your proposal. It is very important that you select the most relevant program as the primary organization because that is the organization that is most likely to have primary responsibility for reviewing your proposal. Do not submit duplicate CAREER proposals to multiple disciplinary programs. Your proposal must be submitted by the CAREER deadline of the primary Directorate/Office that you selected in the cover sheet.

NSF encourages multidisciplinary proposals. You are strongly encouraged to contact the Program Officer most closely related to the subject matter when preparing a cross-disciplinary proposal. Proposals with a multidisciplinary focus are commonly reviewed by more than one NSF program.

27. I am having problems submitting my proposal and the CAREER deadline is almost here. Whom should I contact?

PIs are strongly encouraged to submit their CAREER proposals well in advance of the deadline to allow time to correct any problems that may occur in the submission process. Issues and questions related to the NSF FastLane system should be directed to the FastLane User Support desk at (800) 673-6188. You can also send an e-mail message to fastlane@nsf.gov. For information on the availability of the NSF FastLane system, phone (800) 437-7408 for a recorded message. For Grants.gov user support, contact the Grants.gov contact center by phone at (800) 518-4726 or by email at support@grants.gov. If FastLane or Grants.gov is unable to resolve the submission problem and you cannot submit your proposal by the deadline, please make sure to get documentation that you contacted the support center before your deadline. For NSF to consider a deadline extension you must provide supporting documentation from FastLane or Grants.gov that there was a problem at the time of submission that could not be resolved in time. A possible slowdown of these systems due to volume is not a valid reason for an extension.

28. I just noticed a major problem with my CAREER proposal. My CAREER deadline has not passed so can I fix the problem?

Yes, if you see a problem **before the deadline**, you may use the FastLane Proposal File Update Module to replace files or revise other Proposal Attributes of a submitted proposal. A request for a proposal file update will be automatically accepted only if submitted prior to your CAREER deadline. On rare occasions, a proposal has technical problems due to PDF Conversion or printing problems. If your deadline has passed and you discover this problem, contact your disciplinary Program Officer to discuss whether NSF will approve a proposal file update. You should thoroughly review your proposal before it is submitted, including identifying any PDF conversion or printing problems. You are encouraged to download the submitted version of your proposal from the FastLane site to ascertain that that version contains all the proposal parts and that it is compliant.

29. Do I submit a proposal to just the CAREER program solicitation or to a particular program at NSF and how do I decide to which program I should submit my CAREER proposal?

CAREER proposals must be submitted to the CAREER program solicitation through FastLane or Grants.gov. During the proposal submission process, you must select at least one specific NSF disciplinary program most related to the proposed work.

First, you should determine whether the proposed research project falls within the realm of research that NSF normally supports. If it does, then you will need to identify one or more disciplinary programs related to your research goals. One way to get a good overview of NSF is to look at the titles of the Directorates, Divisions, and Programs. The NSF Guide to Programs and Directorate and Division web pages provide descriptions of the topic areas supported by NSF disciplinary programs.

You may also search on keywords in the NSF Award Search tool (<https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/>) to find funded research projects in areas related to your project. The results indicate the NSF program(s) supporting those projects.

If NSF determines that your proposal is more appropriate for a different program than the primary one you selected, the proposal will be reassigned to the appropriate organizational unit. NSF will make the final determination of where your proposal will be assigned and considered. You can track your proposal's assignment and progress through FastLane.

C. ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAREER AWARDS

30. When will I be notified of the final decision on my CAREER proposal?

Most proposers will be notified within six months of submission. You can check the status of your CAREER proposal by accessing the FastLane website. If you have not received notification of a decision on your proposal within six months of its submission and your proposal status is shown as "pending" in FastLane, you can contact the program or division to which your proposal was assigned to inquire about the status of your proposal.

D. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

31. Are the reporting requirements for CAREER awards the same as for other NSF awards?

In addition to meeting all of the requirements for annual and final reports that apply to other NSF awards, the reports for CAREER awards must summarize progress in both research and educational activities and indicate how well these activities are being integrated and assessed. Collaborative and international activities should also be described.

32. What types of supplemental funds are available for CAREER awards?

CAREER awards are eligible for supplemental funding as described in the PAPPG (e.g., international activities, Research Experiences for Undergraduates, Career-Life-Balance). Contact your disciplinary Program Officer to ask about possible supplemental funding opportunities for CAREER awards.

33. What happens to my CAREER award if I leave my academic appointment for a position that is tenured, tenure-track, or tenure-track-equivalent at a CAREER-eligible institution?

If the principal investigator transfers at any time prior to or during the award period to a position that is tenured, tenure-track, or tenure-track-equivalent at a CAREER-eligible institution, the CAREER award may be transferred to the new institution. Before such a transfer is approved by NSF, the PI's new organization must supply documentation, including a new Departmental Letter. The new Departmental Letter must document support for the project goals as described in the original proposal or in a revised scope, as well as provide a plan for the mentoring of the PI.

If a CAREER award has EPSCoR co-funding, no portion of the EPSCoR funds may be transferred to a non-EPSCoR institution.

34. What happens to my CAREER award if I leave my academic appointment for a position that is neither tenured, tenure-track, nor tenure-track-equivalent; or for a position at a new organization that is not CAREER-eligible?

The CAREER award must be relinquished in such cases. This includes transfer to a university or college outside the U.S. or to a non-academic, non-CAREER-eligible institution. In these circumstances, transfer of the CAREER award to a substitute PI is not permissible. However, funding may be expended to allow the students or postdoctoral researchers to continue to be supported on the award for the remaining funded year. The award would then terminate at the end of that funded year. Contact the disciplinary Program Officer as soon you know you will be leaving to inquire about this possibility.

35. What happens to my CAREER award if I am unable to continue the project?

If the PI is unable to continue work, long-term continued support of the graduate and postdoctoral students supported

under the CAREER project may be possible. If the PI's institution provides evidence that other faculty members are willing and able to provide high-caliber mentoring of the students, then the cognizant Program Officer can request that the NSF Division of Grants and Agreements approve the appointment of a substitute PI at the institution for the award with budget modified by elimination of PI salary. Support for students and postdoctoral associates (including travel to conferences and other items in the budget) would remain unchanged. Such action is most strongly supported when the students can pursue research in projects that are the same as those established by the original PI or in closely-allied areas.