



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 18-027

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for NSF INCLUDES Dear Colleague Letter (NSF 17-111): Announcement of an Effort to Expand the NSF INCLUDES National Network

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1. What is NSF INCLUDES?

NSF INCLUDES is one of [NSF's Ten Big Ideas for Future NSF Investment](#) meant to catalyze interest and investment in fundamental research, discovery, invention and innovation. NSF INCLUDES is catalyzing novel approaches to broadening participation in STEM by creating the NSF INCLUDES National Network, composed of NSF INCLUDES Design and Development Launch Pilots, NSF INCLUDES Alliances, NSF-funded broadening participation projects, other relevant NSF-funded projects, scholars engaged in broadening participation research, and other organizations that support the development of talent from all sectors of society to build the STEM workforce. NSF INCLUDES incentivizes the building of **collaborative infrastructure** that will bring people and organizations together who might currently be working in isolation.

2. Could you elaborate on what you mean by collaborative infrastructure?

By **collaborative infrastructure** we mean the structures and facilities that enable collaboration across organizations and institutions with a shared goal or vision; map out mutually reinforcing activities; develop goals, objectives and measures to map their progress; engage in constant communication; and advance the potential for expanding, scaling and sustaining the collaborative efforts that would not be possible otherwise. For the NSF INCLUDES National Network, collaborative infrastructure fosters coordination and collaboration by emphasizing the following five characteristics: Vision; Partnerships, Goals and Metrics; Leadership and Communication; and the Potential for Expansion, Sustainability and Scale. Every NSF INCLUDES project and the NSF INCLUDES National Network engage a broad community in a shared **vision** of the importance and power of diversity for scientific innovation. **Partnerships** and networks are at the heart of the NSF INCLUDES National Network, and through the Coordination Hub, Alliances, Design and Development Launch Pilots, and other network building mechanisms like this Dear Colleague Letter, NSF hopes to provide platforms for partnerships and collaborative action. Partnerships and networks will be driven by shared **goals and metrics** that allow for robust data that facilitate evidence-based decision making. NSF INCLUDES is also designed to build capacity for **leadership and communication** among organizations and individuals to create opportunities in STEM education and careers. Finally, collaborative infrastructure should lead to **expansion, sustainability and scale** by encouraging more partners to join the movement, thus enabling more connections and opportunities for large-scale change to occur.

3. What are collaborative change strategies?

Examples of collaborative change strategies include [Collective Impact](#), [Networked Improvement Communities](#), and [Research + Practice Partnerships](#). Collaborative change

strategies are frameworks used to tackle deeply entrenched, complex problems, like broadening participation in STEM. Such strategies are designed to make collaboration work across government, business, philanthropy, non-profit organizations and individuals to achieve significant and lasting change. Other potential frameworks are possible, and we encourage projects to explore various ways to harness the power of collaboration.

4. What is NSF INCLUDES seeking in Conference proposals submitted in response to this Dear Colleague Letter?

NSF INCLUDES invites Conference proposals that will link the NSF INCLUDES National Network to the knowledge base and results from the wider NSF broadening participation portfolio of programs and projects (the NSF website lists the [NSF Broadening Participation portfolio](#) programs). We are also interested in connecting the NSF INCLUDES National Network to the knowledge and experiences of NSF-funded center-scale activities, such as our [Science and Technology Centers](#) or [Engineering Research Centers](#). Communicating the knowledge and results of other major NSF investments, and encouraging collaboration across NSF-funded efforts with the NSF INCLUDES National Network are also desirable goals of conferences. More ideas for NSF INCLUDES conferences include: facilitating a new or existing collaborative dialog among organizations that are interested in opportunities to connect with the NSF INCLUDES National Network; communicating research findings from the science of broadening participation research community to the NSF INCLUDES National Network; and/or providing a platform for new collaborations within the NSF INCLUDES National Network. Please send a one-page description of your Conference idea to NSFINCLUDES@nsf.gov in advance of a full proposal submission so that we may discuss with you the appropriateness of your idea prior to your developing a full proposal.

5. What do you mean by link to the NSF INCLUDES Network? Does that refer to the goals of NSF INCLUDES or to specific projects?

Both options are acceptable. We encourage conferences that would include current NSF INCLUDES Design and Development Launch Pilot projects, but this is not a requirement. Linking to the NSF INCLUDES Network might also be facilitated through dialog about the goals of NSF INCLUDES and how participating organizations might become involved in efforts to: bring together dedicated partners; find solutions that work; and build a nation where everyone has opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

6. What kinds of outcomes does NSF INCLUDES expect from conferences?

The outcomes of NSF INCLUDES conferences include the engagement of individuals, organizations and groups with the concepts and ideas of the NSF INCLUDES National Network, with a view toward expanding the network. Additional outcomes of Conference grants may include (but are not limited to): presenting the findings from discussions at PI and other stakeholder meetings; a summary report from the conference gathering, including lessons learned about broadening participation and collaborative change; an edited volume in a journal, with articles based on the discussion by conference participants; and/or publication of scholarly journal articles based on conference discussions or resulting research.

7. What does NSF INCLUDES want from successful EARly-Concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER) proposals?

In the context of this DCL, EAGERS are research projects that produce findings and results that will: generate new insights for the NSF INCLUDES National Network; suggest potential strategies for engaging NSF's existing broadening participation activities in the Network; and/or highlight lessons learned that could inform the NSF INCLUDES Launch Pilots and Alliances as they develop. EAGERS that use new theoretical approaches, methods, or data collection strategies to help foster deeper understanding of collaborative change strategies, common metrics, or how networks can expand and reach "scale" are encouraged. Studies should: be grounded in a relevant research theory or framework; apply appropriate methods; and further the evidence-based research that could illustrate the efficacy of collaborative change approaches. Appropriate goals of EAGER proposals could include developing new measures or approaches for assessing networks, or gathering preliminary data in support of theoretical approaches to understanding collaborative change. Note that these are just some ideas; NSF INCLUDES welcomes other ideas for EAGERS. EAGERS that use data science, including data analytic methodologies to understand network operations and effective expansion and management for broadening participation are especially encouraged. Please send a one-page description of your EAGER idea to NSFINCLUDES@nsf.gov in advance of a full proposal submission so that we may discuss with you the appropriateness of your idea prior to your developing a full proposal.

8. How are NSF INCLUDES EAGERS different from other broadening participation efforts funded by NSF?

In the context of this DCL, EAGERS are research grants to help us understand how collaboration functions within the context of broadening participation in STEM. The focus of an EAGER is not on implementation but on theoretical research that grows the knowledge base. The [NSF Broadening Participation Portfolio](#) includes other programs that may fund interventions with a goal of broadening participation in STEM. Those interested in implementation might consult the list of Broadening Participation programs at NSF. Similarly, research proposals that could be submitted to the various Science of Broadening Participation tracks in the Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences or the Directorate for Education and Human Resources, in response to [NSF 17-143](#), Dear Colleague Letter: Stimulating Research Related to the Science of Broadening Participation), or through the Directorate for Engineering's Broadening Participation in Engineering program should be submitted to those programs rather than as an EAGER. EAGERS are also not evaluation studies of interventions.

9. How will you distinguish between an EAGER proposal and a Design and Development Launch Pilot proposal [NSF 17-522](#)? Wouldn't an EAGER grant end up being groundwork that could become a Design and Development Launch Pilot?

Design and Development Launch Pilots are projects that are taking the first steps toward building and implementing collaborative infrastructure for broadening participation in STEM.

An EAGER grant is a research grant. In an EAGER proposal, we will be looking for research questions that stem from a theoretical foundation, and data collection and analysis strategies that will answer those questions. Design and Development Launch Pilot proposals as described in [NSF 17-522](#) have very specific characteristics and requirements that are significantly different from those of a research project.

10. What kinds of outcomes do you expect from EAGER projects?

EAGERS should produce high-quality research suitable for publication in scholarly journals and presentations at professional conferences. EAGER projects might also culminate in a "lessons learned" document or white paper to share with the NSF INCLUDES National Network. We encourage EAGER researchers to attend PI and other stakeholder meetings to share the results of the research with the NSF INCLUDES National Network.

11. Would it be appropriate for an EAGER project to study existing collaborations/Networked Improvement Communities that are currently NSF funded?

An EAGER proposal involving an existing collaboration would be acceptable if it is a theoretically-driven examination of specific research questions about how collaboration functions within the specific context. The proposal should provide clear research questions and a data collection and analysis plan that would answer those questions. The outcomes should include publishable research that furthers our understanding of collaborative change strategies. EAGER projects should not be evaluations of existing efforts.

12. Can one institution submit both an EAGER and a Conference proposal related to the same topic? Can one institution submit more than one EAGER proposal?

There is no limit on the number of EAGER or Conference proposals that an institution may submit. We do ask that you send us a one-page description of each EAGER and/or Conference idea to NSFINCLUDES@nsf.gov in advance of a full proposal submission so that we may discuss with you the appropriateness of your idea prior to your developing a full proposal.

13. Can partnerships include institutions from outside of U.S.?

Yes, partnerships may include institutions outside of the US, but keep in mind that NSF INCLUDES is about broadening participation in STEM within the US. If you want to include an international partner, you will need to justify how that partnership will help broadening participation by underrepresented groups within the US.

14. Can a for-profit research firm apply for an EAGER or a Conference grant?

The categories of proposers eligible to submit proposals to the National Science Foundation are identified in the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)*, Chapter I.E. US commercial organizations, especially small businesses with strong capabilities in scientific or engineering research or education, are eligible to apply for NSF grants including submission of Conference proposals. NSF INCLUDES is particularly interested in supporting

projects that couple industry research, resources and perspectives with those of universities, schools, and non-profit organizations and so welcomes proposals for collaborative projects involving the private commercial sector.

15. On average, how many organizations should participate in this collaboration?

NSF does not stipulate the number of partnering organizations in any collaboration. Proposers are encouraged to consider the funding amount and the activities that might be achieved given that limitation and then realistically consider how many partners are feasible.

16. If we don't have a current NSF INCLUDES Design and Development Launch Pilot project, then is an EAGER or Conference grant still possible?

Having an NSF INCLUDES Design and Development Launch Pilot is not a prerequisite for submitting an EAGER or Conference proposal. Any organization eligible per the PAPPG may submit an EAGER or Conference proposal in response to this DCL. However, we do ask that you submit a one-page summary of your project idea to NSFINCLUDES@nsf.gov in advance of a full proposal submission so that we may discuss with you the appropriateness of your idea prior to your developing a full proposal.

17. If we do have a current NSF INCLUDES Design and Development Launch Pilot project, can we also submit an EAGER or Conference proposal?

Current NSF INCLUDES Design and Development Launch Pilot grantees are eligible to submit an EAGER or Conference proposal. We do ask that you submit a one-page summary of your project idea to NSFINCLUDES@nsf.gov in advance of a full proposal submission so that we may discuss with you the appropriateness of your idea prior to your developing a full proposal.

18. How will EAGER and Conference proposals be reviewed?

All NSF proposals are evaluated through two merit review criteria: the intellectual merit of a proposal is its potential to advance the knowledge base in a subject area; the broader impacts of a proposal is its potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes. Please make sure your EAGER and/or Conference proposal addresses both the intellectual merit and the broader impacts of your idea in both the project summary and the project description. Conference proposals that come in at or over \$100,000 will undergo external merit review; those under that amount may go through internal or external NSF merit review. EAGER proposals will go through the internal NSF merit review process. We highly recommend you read the sections on EAGERS and/or Conference proposals in the NSF [PAPPG](#) before writing your proposal.

19. What is NSF INCLUDES looking for in requests for supplemental funding?

NSF INCLUDES supplements should involve connecting an existing NSF award or a group of NSF awards to, and becoming part of, the NSF INCLUDES National Network. NSF INCLUDES will consider supplemental funding for existing NSF grants to create opportunities

among NSF-funded projects with the goal of building a collaborative infrastructure for broadening participation and connection to the NSF INCLUDES National Network. Supplements may also provide seed money for experiments using collaborative change strategies for broadening participation in conjunction with the NSF INCLUDES National Network. Supplement grantees might develop linkages between an NSF-funded project and an NSF INCLUDES Design and Development Launch Pilot. Supplements may also be used to generate new ideas for bringing a community of NSF-funded projects into the NSF INCLUDES National Network. Becoming part of the NSF INCLUDES National Network is the important part of any supplement activity. We do ask that you send us a one-page description of your Supplement idea to NSFINCLUDES@nsf.gov and discuss your idea with your cognizant program officer in advance of formally submitting a supplement request, so that we may discuss with you the appropriateness of your idea prior to your submitting a supplement request.

20. If we have a current NSF INCLUDES Design and Development Launch Pilot project, can we also submit a Supplement request?

Current NSF INCLUDES Design and Development Launch Pilot grantees are not eligible for Supplements.

21. How are NSF INCLUDES Supplements different from Design and Development Launch Pilots (NSF 17-522) or other broadening participation efforts?

Requests for supplements should describe a collaborative change strategy effort to link an existing NSF-funded activity to the NSF INCLUDES National Network and thereby become a part the NSF INCLUDES National Network. Supplements are not held to the requirements for Design and Development Launch Pilots as described in [NSF 17-522](#) and are not considered Design and Development Launch Pilot projects. Supplements should not be used to implement a single intervention for broadening participation (e.g., offering a summer camp or an after-school program) and are not evaluation studies of interventions. In addition, NSF INCLUDES supplements are not supplements for Research Experiences for Undergraduates, or to add undergraduate or graduate assistants to your project, unless their participation is facilitating networking activities. They should also not be used to add new participants or participant groups to an existing intervention.

22. What kinds of outcomes does NSF INCLUDES expect from Supplements?

Supplement grantees might share data with the NSF INCLUDES National Network, present at PI or stakeholder meetings or produce a summary report of lessons learned about broadening participation and collaborative change. Other outcomes of NSF INCLUDES supplements might involve publishing scholarly journal articles about collaborative change or developing a plan or logic model for how NSF-funded projects might join the NSF INCLUDES National Network and sharing that broadly with other NSF grantees through national and disciplinary conferences. We invite other creative ideas for how to link existing NSF grantees to the NSF INCLUDES National Network through supplements. Supplement grantees are expected to participate in the NSF INCLUDES National Network by attending PI and other

stakeholder meetings.

23. Will there be another solicitation for Design and Development Launch Pilots in FY 2018?

At this time, we do not anticipate another Design and Development Launch Pilot solicitation in FY 2018.