NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Improving Undergraduate STEM Education: Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Program

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28. Our main campus is an HSI and intends to submit one "Track 1" proposal. Our institution has several branch campuses that are also HSIs with their own chief academic officers and are geographically distinct from the main campus. However, the main and branch campuses do share a single Office of Sponsored Projects and Contract and Grant Accounting Office. Are the branch campuses eligible to apply as separate entities?

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31. Will proposals with evaluators external to the institution receive more preference over proposals with evaluators internal to the institution?

32. Can the project evaluator be a PI?

33. Can the project evaluator lead the research study of the project?

34. Must a specific evaluator be selected prior to submitting the proposal (i.e., named in the proposal)?

35. Will we need Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of the evaluation activities and instruments described in our proposal?

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GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Where can I find information about the HSI Program?**

   Information about the HSI Program can be found at: https://www.nsf.gov/ehr/HSIProgramPlan.jsp and on the webpage: https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=505512.

2. **Where can I find information about upcoming HSI Conferences?**

   Information about HSI conferences (including past meetings) can be obtained at: https://www.nsf.gov/ehr/HSIProgramPlan.jsp.

3. **Will there be HSI Program webinars?**

   All HSI Program webinars will be posted on the HSI Program webpage. Please check the webpage (https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=505512) for

webinar information, program updates and outreach activities.

4. **Will webinar slides be made available to the community?**

   Yes, webinar slides will be posted to the HSI Program webpage after the webinars. Please check the webpage https://www.nsf.gov/ehr/HSIProgramPlan.jsp for postings.

5. **How quickly will proposals be reviewed?**

   The program review process takes approximately 6 months from the proposal deadline.

6. **My institution is submitting a proposal to the S-STEM program. Can we also submit a proposal to the HSI Program?**

   Yes. Submission of a proposal to another NSF program does not preclude you from submitting to the HSI Program. However, substantially similar or duplicate proposals will be returned without review.

   Note: An institution that has received an award notice from an NSF program, prior to the HSI Program submission deadline, is **ineligible** to apply to Track 2.

7. **What are the specific NSF expectations for intellectual merit for the HSI Program solicitation?**

   Intellectual merit is defined in the solicitation and in Chapter III. A. of the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG): https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg.

ELIGIBILITY

8. **How do I know if my institution is eligible to apply to the HSI Program?**

   Eligible organizations for the HSI Program must be accredited and offer undergraduate educational programs in STEM, and satisfy the HSI definition as specified in section 502 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1101a), i.e., a) be an eligible institution (as defined in the legislation); and b) have an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students (http://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/HEA65_CMD.pdf).

   An HSI Certification Form (see question 10 below) is required with submission of a proposal to the HSI Program.

9. **My institution does not meet the enrollment of financially needy students under a) "be an eligible institution" but meets the requirements of b) has "an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic**

students." Is my institution eligible to apply?

No. Institutions eligible to apply are required to certify that they satisfy the definition of a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) as defined by law in section 502 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1101a) (http://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/HEA65_CMD.pdf), which includes both parts a) and b).

10. **Where can I find the HSI Certification Form?**

The HSI Certification Form is available here: https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=505512. The HSI Certification Form signed by the institution's Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) must be included as a supplementary document with the proposal.

Institutions should review the legislation before certifying their eligibility to this program (http://legcounsel.house.gov/Comps/HEA65_CMD.pdf).

11. **Does an eligible institution have to submit the NSF HSI Certification Form or can that institution submit its own HSI Certification form?**

The HSI Certification Form provided on the HSI Program webpage must be submitted with a proposal to the HSI Program. The program will not accept substitutions to this requirement. Proposals will be returned without review if the required form is not signed by your AOR and submitted as a supplementary document with your proposal to the HSI Program.

12. **Can an organization be the lead institution for more than one proposal?**

An eligible institution **can** be the lead on both Track 1 and Track 2 proposals. However, an eligible institution may be the lead of at most one Track 1 proposal.

13. **My institution is an HSI with multiple campuses (or branches) that are HSIs. Can each campus submit a proposal?**

Yes. Each academic institution (branch institution or campus) submitting a proposal should have its own chief academic officer and should be geographically separate from the other campuses.

14. **Can a non-academic institution be the lead organization on a proposal to the HSI Program?**

No. Non-academic institutions cannot be the lead organization for the HSI Program. Non-academic institutions along with other ineligible academic institutions (e.g. emerging HSIs, consortium of eligible institutions, and non-HSIs) may be included as

collaborating partners on multiple proposals.

15. **Are collaborative proposals accepted?**

    Yes. Collaborative proposals are allowed as long as the lead institution is an HSI and the lead principal investigator (PI) is employed by the lead institution. The subawardee institutions and/or the non-lead institutions do not have to be HSIs. See PAPPG Chapter II.D.3 for the methods of submitting collaborative proposals (https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).

16. **If my institution received a subaward, does that count as receiving NSF funding for purposes of determining eligibility to submit a proposal to Track 2?**

    No. Institutions that are or have been subawardees on an NSF award do not count as having received NSF funding (awardees). Note: subawardees and collaborating partner institutions are not considered the awardee organization.

17. **My institution has received NSF EPSCoR funds as a subawardee but has never directly received NSF funds as a lead institution. Does my institution qualify for Track 2: HSIs New to NSF?**

    Yes. Your institution is eligible for Track 2. As noted above, your institution was a subawardee and not the lead institution, therefore your institution is not considered the recipient (awardee) of NSF funds.

INDIRECT COST RATES

18. **What if my institution does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate?**

    Organizations that do not have a current US federally negotiated indirect cost rate(s) may request a *de minimus* indirect cost recovery rate of 10% of modified total direct costs. See PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.g(viii) for additional information (https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).

    If you do not hold a formally negotiated indirect cost rate and are requesting indirect costs **in excess** of the "*de minimus*" rate of 10% of modified total direct costs, please refer to the NSF Indirect Cost Rate Proposal Submission Procedures at: https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/caar/docs/idcsubmissions.pdf.

19. **As an HSI new to NSF, we are just negotiating an indirect cost rate now. Can we use the *de minimus* rate?**

    Yes. See response to question 16 above.

20. **Does NSF have a limit or cap on the indirect cost rate for institutions?**

Except where specifically identified in an NSF program solicitation, institutions must use their applicable US federally negotiated indirect cost rate(s) for a proposal. See PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.g(viii) for additional information (https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).

TRACK 1

21. **For Track 1, does the award amount include indirect costs?**

    The award amount is the total award which includes indirect costs. The maximum amount that can be requested for the entire project period is $2,500,000.

22. **Do Track 1 proposals need to be multi-institutional?**

    No. Track 1 proposals can involve a single institution or multiple institutions.

23. **Are you expecting proposals to address all of the priority areas?**

    No. As noted in the solicitation, "proposals should focus on one or more of these priority areas, as appropriate to the project goals." In the Overview section of the Project Summary, indicate which priority area(s) is(are) addressed.

24. **If a Track 1 proposal includes transition between a two-year and a four-year institution, do both institutions need to be HSIs?**

    No. The lead institution **must** be an HSI (see the response to question 8 for the eligibility requirement) but not the collaborating institution.

25. **For a Track 1 proposal, can a faculty member from a non-HSI be a co-PI?**

    Yes. Partnerships/collaborations with non-HSIs are supported as stated in the HSI Program solicitation NSF 19-540. The lead PI must be employed by an HSI.

26. **Our institution is an HSI that has never received NSF funding. Can we submit a proposal to Track 1 or are we restricted to Track 2 only?**

    As an HSI that is New to NSF, you can submit to either Track 1 or Track 2, or both. (As a reminder, only institutions that have never received NSF funding or have not received NSF funding in the last five years can submit to Track 2.)

27. **My institution has a currently funded HSI Program project. Can we submit a proposal to Track 1?**

    Yes. Having a currently funded HSI Program project does not preclude you from submitting a proposal for a different project to Track 1. (As a reminder, an institution can

submit only one proposal to Track 1.)

28. **Our main campus is an HSI and intends to submit one "Track 1" proposal. Our institution has several branch campuses that are also HSIs with their own chief academic officers and are geographically distinct from the main campus. However, the main and branch campuses do share a single Office of Sponsored Projects and Contract and Grant Accounting Office. Are the branch campuses eligible to apply as separate entities?**

    Yes, each institution (branch institution or campus) submitting a proposal to the HSI Program should be geographically separate from other campuses and have its own chief academic officer.

TRACK 2

29. **Where can I find information for new awardees?**

    Information for new awardees can be found in the *Prospective New Awardee Guide* (PNAG): https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pnag.

30. **The program solicitation indicates that an institution eligible for this track has never received NSF funding or has not received funding from NSF in the five years prior to the proposal deadline. Does the five-year window start from the date when a prior NSF grant was awarded or when it expired?**

    The five-year rule is based on the last funded award end date including any no-cost extensions.

PROJECT EVALUATION AND RESEARCH DESIGN

31. **Will proposals with evaluators external to the institution receive more preference over proposals with evaluators internal to the institution?**

    No. All proposals must have an independent evaluator to the project but the evaluator could be internal to the institution. However, if an evaluator internal to the institution is used, the proposal should provide justification and explain how the independence of the evaluator is ensured.

32. **Can the project evaluator be a PI?**

    No. The evaluation must be conducted by a third party that is independent of the project.

33. **Can the project evaluator lead the research study of the project?**

No. The project evaluator can help inform the research study but should not lead the research study. The project leadership team should be instrumental in leading the research study.

34. **Must a specific evaluator be selected prior to submitting the proposal (i.e., named in the proposal)?**

    Yes. Including an evaluator at the initial stages of proposal development helps to ensure that the evaluation is aligned with project activities, goals, and objectives and can be fine-tuned for reporting requirements.

35. **Will we need Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of the evaluation activities and instruments described in our proposal?**

    If your proposal is recommended for an award, you will need to provide official documentation from your institution's IRB confirming either that the planned activities involving human subjects have been approved or that your project falls into an exemption category.

36. **Does my project have to include both a research design and evaluation plan?**

    Yes. Every project must include both a research design and a project evaluation. The research design should address a research question and/or hypothesis that is important to the project and the field. The evaluation plan examines all aspects of the project activities to inform the project's progress towards its goals. The research design together with the project evaluation provide evidence of the project's overall impact. See Section II.C. in program solicitation NSF 19-540 for more information.

    The following references may be helpful in designing research study and/or evaluation plans:

    - AIHEC Indigenous Evaluation Framework: https://portalcentral.aihec.org/Indigeval/Lists/IndigenousEvaluationFrmWork/AllItems.aspx;
    - Common Guidelines for Education Research and Development: https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf13126;
    - Evaluation e-library of the American Evaluation Association Resource Library: http://www.eval.org;
    - Evidence: An Essential Tool Report: https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf0531;
    - The 2010 User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation: http://www.evalu-ate.org/wp-content/uploads/formidable/Doc_2010_NSFHandbook.pdf;
    - The American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles for Evaluators:

http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51;
- The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation: http://www.jcsee.org/program-evaluation-standards-statements;
- User-Friendly Handbook for Mixed Method Evaluations: https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf97153.