



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE  
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for International Research Experiences for Students (IRES)

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1. I am planning to recruit 5-8 students for my IRES Site (Track I). May I recruit students from other universities, not only from my own?
2. Do I have to pay stipends to the students?
3. May I budget some salary for the Principal Investigator (PI) and co-PI(s)?
4. In my IRES proposal, may I request support for a graduate research assistant (GRA)?
5. In my IRES Track I proposal, may I budget some salary for my foreign collaborator who will mentor our IRES students in their lab?
6. My IRES students will need supplies while working abroad. Can I pay a foreign organization for these supplies?
7. Am I allowed to make subawards, subcontracts, or pay consulting fees?
8. My international collaborators, who will serve as mentors to U.S. IRES students, are willing to come to our U.S. campus to help with student preparation prior to their departure. Can I pay them?
9. In my IRES Track II proposal, can I pay the foreign lecturers for the Advanced Studies Institutes?
10. I am an undergraduate (or graduate) student, very interested in this IRES opportunity. How do I apply for this grant?
11. How should I address the ongoing uncertainties related to COVID-19 in my proposal?
12. My IRES 2020 cohort of students were unable to travel in summer 2020 due to COVID-19. Can I send these students abroad in 2021 or do I need to recruit a new cohort for 2021?
13. Do I need to submit letters of collaboration from my foreign collaborators?
14. Do I need to submit biographical sketches of my foreign collaborators?

15. [Can I select a Foreign Campus of a U.S. institution as the host site for my IRES project?](#)

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**1. I am planning to recruit 5-8 students for my IRES Site (Track I). May I recruit students from other universities, not only from my own?**

Yes, you may recruit locally, regionally, or nationally; it is up to you, whatever works best for your project. Each approach has advantages and disadvantages. You should explain your recruitment and student selection strategy thoroughly in the proposal as it is a key IRES-specific review criterion.

**2. Do I have to pay stipends to the students?**

Yes, for IRES Sites (Track I). Participating students must be given a stipend in the range of \$500 - \$600 per week for the duration of the IRES Site. The same hourly rate of stipend should be used to compensate students involved in hybrid models or part-time research. Graduate students can be part of the IRES Site cohort, and they can be paid for their contribution in the IRES Site project, but full-time graduate research assistant support or their tuition fees are not allowed.

**3. May I budget some salary for the Principal Investigator (PI) and co-PI(s)?**

Yes, the solicitation states that up to one month total of PI/co-PI salary per project year may be budgeted.

**4. In my IRES proposal, may I request support for a graduate research assistant (GRA)?**

No. The IRES proposal (regardless of the Track) is not your own research project where you request NSF to support graduate assistants for your work. Graduate students can be part of the IRES Site cohort, and they can be paid for their participation in, and contribution to the project; but full-time graduate research assistant support or their tuition fees are not allowed in either Track.

**5. In my IRES Track I proposal, may I budget some salary for my foreign collaborator who will mentor our IRES students in their lab?**

No. They will be "unfunded collaborators" in the project. You may NOT use IRES funds to support your foreign collaborators or foreign students.

**6. My IRES students will need supplies while working abroad. Can I pay a foreign organization for these supplies?**

Yes, you may use IRES funds to cover materials, supplies, and services if they are needed for your students to work on their research projects. You can pay U.S. or foreign organizations for supplies and services; however, the payment can NOT be arranged as a subaward to a foreign institution. You also need to provide a justification for such charges in your budget.

**7. Am I allowed to make subawards, subcontracts, or pay consulting fees?**

Yes, you may use IRES funds to cover materials, supplies, and services if they are needed for your students to work on their research projects. You can pay U.S. or foreign organizations for supplies and services; however, the payment can NOT be arranged as a subaward to a foreign institution. You also need to provide a justification for such charges in your budget.

**8. My international collaborators, who will serve as mentors to U.S. IRES students, are willing to come to our U.S. campus to help with student preparation prior to their departure. Can I pay them?**

You can cover standard travel expenses for your international visitors. You cannot pay their salaries or any other remuneration.

**9. In my IRES Track II proposal, can I pay the foreign lecturers for the Advanced Studies Institutes?**

Yes. You can pay them reasonable (small) honoraria.

**10. I am an undergraduate (or graduate) student, very interested in this IRES opportunity. How do I apply for this grant?**

Students do not apply for this grant directly to NSF. IRES grants are made to U.S. Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) and U.S. non-profit, non-academic organizations and the grantee organization will announce/advertise the availability of slots for student recruitment. You can check the currently active IRES Sites by clicking this link: <https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/advancedSearchResult?ProgEleCode=079Y,080Y,7727&BooleanElement=Any&BooleanRef=Any&ActiveAwards=true#results>

**11. How should I address the ongoing uncertainties related to COVID-19 in my proposal?**

NSF recognizes the uncertain environment. The updated IRES solicitation encourages PIs to outline virtual, hybrid or other alternative approaches to strengthen and maintain international collaboration in the event travel is not undertaken, and/or in addition to travel.

**12. My IRES 2020 cohort of students were unable to travel in summer 2020 due to COVID-19. Can I send these students abroad in 2021 or do I need to recruit a new cohort for 2021?**

You are free to send the same cohort in 2021, given that the students did not yet have an IRES experience.

**13. Do I need to submit letters of collaboration from my foreign collaborators?**

Yes. This solicitation requires descriptive letters of collaboration, in lieu of the standard language contained in the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) [Chapter II.C.2.j](#). Please see the proposal preparation instructions in the solicitation (Item 4: Supplementary Documentation) for details.

**14. Do I need to submit biographical sketches of my foreign collaborators?**

Yes. Biographical sketches (in the NSF format outlined in PAPPG [Chapter II.C.2.f.](#)) for principal foreign collaborators are required.

**15. Can I select a Foreign Campus of a U.S. institution as the host site for my IRES project?**

The concept of taking U.S. students to a foreign country to do research in a U.S. institution is contrary to the spirit and intent of the solicitation. The main idea of IRES is that the U.S. students get research experience in a foreign country under the mentorship of foreign mentors and spend time in a research environment and academic culture that is different from what they are accustomed to in U.S. institutions.