



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE  
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 21-123

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for EAR Postdoctoral Research Fellowships (EARPF) Program

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1. Should I submit my proposal through a university or institution, or do I have to submit as an individual?
  2. Do I need to be affiliated with the postdoctoral institution at the time of submission? If not, can I propose more than one institution?
  3. I am already a postdoctoral fellow. Can I propose to continue my fellowship at the same institution?
  4. Can I have more than one host mentor? If yes, do they have to be at the same institution?
  5. Can I submit reference or recommendation letters?
  6. Can I choose a foreign institution (and a mentor at that site) for my postdoctoral work?
  7. I do not have my dissertation defense scheduled. What is the latest date I could defend and still be eligible to apply?
  8. May I be on a temporary visa when I submit the proposal?
  9. What documents other than the Data Management Plan may be submitted as supplemental documents?
  10. What documents should be submitted as single copy documents?
  11. Do I need to submit the Biographical Sketches of my PhD advisor and host mentor?
  12. My research idea is not on the solicitation theme; may I submit a proposal on my research idea?
  13. What is the eligibility requirement exception for the November 3, 2021 deadline?
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**1. Should I submit my proposal through a university or institution, or do I have to submit as an individual?**

EAR Postdoctoral Research Fellowships are awards to individuals. Thus, proposals must be submitted directly by the fellowship candidate to NSF.

**2. Do I need to be affiliated with the postdoctoral institution at the time of submission? If not, can I propose more than one institution?**

No, applicants do not need to be affiliated with the host institution at the time of submitting the proposal. However, candidates must identify a **primary** host institution with which they will be affiliated during the fellowship. The host mentor must be affiliated with the primary host institution.

**3. I am already a postdoctoral fellow. Can I propose to continue my fellowship at the same institution?**

Yes, if you meet **all** eligibility criteria at the time of submission: 1) no more than 18 full-time equivalent months in a position that requires a doctoral degree (*see exception in 13 below*); 2) at least 12 months at the institution; and 3) engagement of a new collaborator as a second mentor.

**4. Can I have more than one host mentor? If yes, do they have to be at the same institution?**

Yes, but it must be justified within the project description. If you propose to have more than one host mentor, they can be at the same institution or at different institutions. A letter of collaboration must be submitted by each mentor if they are at different institutions. Please keep in mind that a mentor plays a very different role from collaborators. See the EAR-PF Solicitation ([NSF 21-605](#)) for specific requirements for mentor letters of collaboration.

**5. Can I submit reference or recommendation letters?**

No, the EAR Postdoctoral Fellowship program does not accept letters of reference or recommendation.

**6. Can I choose a foreign institution (and a mentor at that site) for my postdoctoral work?**

Yes, you may choose to implement the fellowship at a foreign institution.

**7. I do not have my dissertation defense scheduled. What is the latest date I could defend and still be eligible to apply?**

You can apply as a graduate student. If the fellowship is awarded, your PhD degree must be conferred and you will be expected to start the fellowship within one year after notification that you have been selected as a Postdoctoral Fellow.

**8. May I be on a temporary visa when I submit the proposal?**

No, the applicant must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident at the time of application. If you are on a temporary visa you may want to consider partnering with a scientist or group at a US institution to submit a regular research proposal where you are identified as the postdoc working on the project. You may also want to check the Research Associateship Program managed by the US National Academies.

**9. What documents other than the Data Management Plan may be submitted as supplemental documents?**

- The letter(s) of collaboration from the mentor(s) documenting their plan to support your postdoctoral fellowship as noted in the solicitation. Only the items in the solicitation should be included in this letter. It is not a letter of recommendation.
- Any other collaborators may submit letters of collaboration following ONLY the prescribed format in the PAPPG (quoted below):

"If the proposal submitted by Dr. [insert the full name of the Principal Investigator] entitled [insert the proposal title] is selected for funding by NSF, it is my intent to collaborate and/or commit resources as detailed in the Project Description or the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal."

- Letters of recommendation are not allowed.

**10. What documents should be submitted as single copy documents?**

- Your collaborator and affiliation information under "Collaborators and Other Affiliations (COA)" using the [instructions and spreadsheet template](#) as described in the PAPPG.
- Lists of "Collaborators and Other Affiliations (COA)" of your proposed mentor(s) and your Ph.D. advisor must be submitted as "Additional Single Copy Documents" using the [instructions and spreadsheet template](#) as described in the PAPPG.
- You must upload a single document containing the following statements affirming your eligibility:
  - Name of proposer
  - Anticipated or actual date of PhD
  - The statement: "I am a U.S. citizen or permanent resident and I am therefore eligible for federal funding."
  - The statement: "I affirm that I have not worked for more than 18 full-time-

equivalent months in positions for which the doctoral degree was a requirement." (See exception in question 13 below.)

- A list of suggested reviewers for the project who are not current collaborators in the submitted lists is appreciated but not required.

*Please note: By signing and submitting the proposal, the fellowship candidate is certifying that they meet the eligibility criteria specified in the program solicitation. Willful provision of false information in supporting documents or in reports required under an ensuing award is a criminal offense (U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 1001).*

**11. Do I need to submit the Biographical Sketches of my PhD advisor and host mentor?**

No, the only biographical sketch that you should submit is your own.

**12. My research idea is not on the solicitation theme; may I submit a proposal on my research idea?**

No, the EARPF program will only accept proposals that fall within the research theme described in the solicitation.

**13. What is the eligibility requirement exception for the November 3, 2021 deadline?**

The timeframe for full-time-equivalent months in a position that requires a doctoral degree has been extended to 20 full-time-equivalent months for the November 3, 2021 deadline ONLY. If you are using this exception, please replace "*18 full-time-equivalent months*" with "*20 full-time-equivalent months*" in the statement of eligibility (described in FAQ question 10).

For further questions contact the program staff at: [earpf@nsf.gov](mailto:earpf@nsf.gov)