



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 23-026

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the Improving Undergraduate STEM Education: Directorate for STEM Education (IUSE: EDU) Program

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GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Where can I find information about the Improving Undergraduate STEM Education: Directorate for STEM Education (IUSE: EDU) program?**

Information about the IUSE: EDU program can be found in the current program solicitation ([NSF 23-510](#)) or on the [program webpage](#).

2. **Will there be webinars about the IUSE: EDU program?**

Webinar information will be posted to the IUSE: EDU [program webpage](#). Please check the webpage for updates and additional information. Recordings of previous webinars will also be made available on the program webpage.

3. **What will the IUSE: EDU webinars cover?**

The webinars will explain and answer questions about the IUSE: EDU program, including reviewing the solicitation, addressing proposal structure, and providing helpful hints for grant writing.

4. **Where can I find information about proposal preparation and submission?**

Proposal preparation and submission information is provided in the *NSF Proposal & Award*

Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG). Additionally, the IUSE: EDU program solicitation ([NSF 23-510](#)) contains program-specific guidance.

5. How do I submit a proposal?

Proposals must be submitted electronically via [Research.gov](#) or [Grants.gov](#). Please see the IUSE: EDU solicitation ([NSF 23-510](#)) for submission information.

6. Who do I contact for help with the submission process?

For help with Research.gov, please call the NSF Help Desk at 1-800-381-1532 or email rgov@nsf.gov. For help with Grants.gov, please visit the Grants.gov [webpage](#).

7. What are the IUSE: EDU program deadlines?

Program deadlines may be found in the program solicitation ([NSF 23-510](#)) and on the [program webpage](#).

ELIGIBILITY

8. Who can submit proposals to the IUSE: EDU program?

The categories of proposers eligible to submit proposals to the National Science Foundation IUSE: EDU program are identified in the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)*, Chapter I.E. Unaffiliated individuals are not eligible to submit proposals in response to this solicitation.

9. Is there a restriction on the number of proposals that an organization or PI/Co-PI can submit?

An individual may serve as PI or co-PI on no more than three IUSE: EDU proposals submitted within a fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). There are no restrictions or limits on the number of proposals per organization within a single fiscal year.

10. How do I know if my ideas are appropriate for an IUSE: EDU proposal?

Questions about ideas for possible proposals to the IUSE: EDU program may be addressed to program officers affiliated with the program. Proposers are invited to contact a program officer with relevant expertise via email for advice about the suitability of a proposed project. Program officers and their expertise, along with their email addresses, are identified on the IUSE: EDU [program website](#). Proposers should send a one-page outline of their project ideas to the program officer of their choice. Advice and guidance from the program officer may be provided via return email or through a scheduled telephone conversation. Program officers reserve the right to forward the query to another program officer with more suitable expertise.

11. How do I determine what track and level to submit to?

Questions about suitability for a particular track or level may be addressed to program officers affiliated with the program. Proposers are invited to contact a relevant program officer for advice about the appropriate track or level. Advice and guidance may be provided via email or through a

scheduled telephone conversation; if email is the preferred method, proposers should send a one-page outline of their project ideas to the program officer. Program officers and their disciplinary expertise are identified on the IUSE: EDU [program website](#).

12. Can I submit to the IUSE program if my organization has never had an NSF award?

Yes, the IUSE: EDU program welcomes proposals from institutions with no prior history of NSF awards. Institutions new to NSF or new to the IUSE: EDU program are advised to consider the Institutional and Community Transformation track Capacity-Building Level, or Level 1 of the Engaged Student Learning track.

REVIEW PROCESS

13. When will my proposal be reviewed?

The review process takes approximately six months from the published program deadline. If a proposal is recommended for funding, additional time may be necessary to negotiate and approve the terms of the award. Once decisions are reached, all reviews will be made available to the proposer.

14. Who will review my proposal?

Most proposals will be reviewed by panels of reviewers. Proposals will be sorted into review panels composed of reviewers with expertise in a STEM discipline or interdisciplinary area, evidence-based STEM educational reform, institutional change, and education research, particularly discipline-based educational research. All types of institutions of higher education will be represented in the reviewer pool and panels will be balanced to ensure gender, racial, ethnic, geographic, and institutional diversity. Some proposals may receive written ad hoc reviews from individual experts instead of or in addition to panel review. Ad hoc reviewers do not participate in the panel review process. They are recruited to fill gaps in panel expertise or to provide expert review of proposals that are not reviewed by a panel. The goal is to ensure that every proposal has appropriate and equitable review.

15. Where do I find my reviews?

Reviews will be released on Research.gov. Proposers will need to log in to their Research.gov accounts and access their proposals to view their reviews. Proposers will receive written verbatim reviews provided by individual reviewers and a written panel summary (if the proposal was discussed by a panel). If a proposal was declined, proposers may also receive written comments from a program officer summarizing the review and decision-making process.

PROPOSAL BUDGETS

16. Where can I find information about preparing a budget for a proposal?

Instructions for proposal preparation may be found in the IUSE: EDU program solicitation ([NSF 23-510](#)) and in the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* ([PAPPG](#)), Chapter II.D.2.

17. Does the budget limit include both direct and indirect costs?

Yes, both direct and indirect costs are included in the budget limit. Proposals that exceed the budget limit for a competition are subject to return without review. Budget limits differ based on whether a proposal is submitted as a Capacity Building, Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 proposal.

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

Organizations that do not have a current US federally negotiated indirect cost rate(s) may use a de *minimis* indirect cost recovery rate of 10% of modified total direct costs in preparing their budget. See [PAPPG](#) Chapter II.D.2 for additional information.

19. Does NSF have a limit or cap on the indirect cost rate for organizations?

Except where identified in an NSF program solicitation, organizations must use their applicable US federally negotiated indirect cost rate(s) for a proposal. See [PAPPG](#) Chapter II.D.2 for additional information. Indirect cost rates are not subject to negotiation with the National Science Foundation.

20. Can IUSE: EDU projects support scholarships for undergraduate students?

No, IUSE: EDU awards may not be used to support scholarships for undergraduate students. However, IUSE: EDU awards may be used to provide stipend support to undergraduate students engaged in project efforts.

PROJECT ELEMENTS

21. What are the required elements of a proposal?

Instructions for proposal preparation, including all required elements, are included in the IUSE: EDU program solicitation ([NSF 23-510](#)) and in the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* ([PAPPG](#)).

22. Do I need to include a project evaluator?

All proposals should include a plan and associated resources to determine the outcomes of the proposed project. Evaluation activities may be conducted by an independent evaluator, by qualified members of the project team, guided by a project advisory board, or by a combination of these approaches.

23. What is meant by "knowledge generation"?

All IUSE: EDU projects are expected to increase knowledge about effective STEM education. This goal may be achieved through (1) posing one or more research questions that will be answered through the course of the study or (2) evaluation of project activities, impacts, or outcomes. Knowledge generation often comes through addressing research or evaluation questions related to what works, for whom, and in what environments.

24. How can I demonstrate that my project will generate new knowledge?

Projects should include a well-designed plan to gather data and should specify methods of

analysis that will be employed to answer the questions posed and mechanisms to evaluate success of the project. Additionally, the proposal should situate the proposed project in current literature and practices, making clear the project's potential to contribute to the existing knowledge base.

25. Does the IUSE: EDU program support replication studies?

Conceptual replication or adaptation studies are encouraged to foster propagation of evidence-based STEM teaching and learning approaches in new settings and environments.

26. Can I submit a Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) supplement for an IUSE: EDU award?

Yes, REU supplement requests may be submitted for IUSE: EDU awards but all IUSE: EDU REU supplement requests must be related to the education research or evaluation proposed in the parent award.

27. What students are considered undergraduate students?

Undergraduate students are those students enrolled at 2-year or 4-year accredited institutions of higher education. Dually enrolled high school students are not considered undergraduate students unless they have matriculated at the 2-year or 4-year accredited institution.

28. Can K-12 students be included in IUSE: EDU projects?

IUSE: EDU projects are expected to focus on undergraduate students. K-12 students may be minimally incorporated in IUSE: EDU projects, e.g. as part of programmatic outreach, but the main focus of IUSE: EDU projects should be on undergraduate students.

29. Can graduate students be included in IUSE: EDU projects?

Graduate students may be included as part of the project team but are not the target audience for IUSE: EDU projects.