

National Science Foundation Research Traineeship (NRT) Program

PROGRAM SOLICITATION

NSF 15-542

REPLACES DOCUMENT(S):
NSF 14-548



National Science Foundation

Directorate for Education & Human Resources
Division of Graduate Education

Directorate for Biological Sciences

Directorate for Computer & Information Science & Engineering

Directorate for Engineering

Directorate for Geosciences

Directorate for Mathematical & Physical Sciences

Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences

Office of International and Integrative Activities

Letter of Intent Due Date(s) (optional) (due by 5 p.m. proposer's local time):

March 25, 2015

Applies to both tracks

December 22, 2015

Applies to both tracks

Full Proposal Deadline(s) (due by 5 p.m. proposer's local time):

May 06, 2015

Applies to both tracks

February 22, 2016

Applies to both tracks

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND REVISION NOTES

This solicitation extends and broadens the scope of the NSF Research Traineeship (NRT) program launched in 2014. Proposals are invited in two tracks: the **Traineeship Track** (maximum 5 years, \$3.0 million), dedicated to the education of STEM graduate students through an innovative, evidence-based traineeship approach in high-priority interdisciplinary research areas; and the **Innovations in Graduate Education (IGE) Track** (2–3 years, up to \$300,000–\$500,000) dedicated solely to piloting, testing, and evaluating bold, new graduate-education approaches, models, and activities and to generate the knowledge required for their customization, implementation, and scaling. This solicitation is active for two years, and future NRT solicitations are anticipated.

A letter of intent is recommended for both tracks.

Important Information

Any proposal submitted in response to this solicitation should be submitted in accordance with the revised NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG) (NSF 15-1), which is effective for proposals submitted, or due, on or after December 26, 2014. The PAPPG is consistent with, and, implements the new Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance) (2 CFR § 200).

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

General Information

Program Title:

Synopsis of Program:

The NSF Research Traineeship (NRT) program is designed to encourage the development and implementation of bold, new, potentially transformative, and scalable models for STEM graduate education training. The NRT program seeks proposals that ensure that graduate students in research-based master's and doctoral degree programs develop the skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to pursue a range of STEM careers. The NRT program includes **two tracks**: the **Traineeship Track** and the **Innovations in Graduate Education (IGE) Track**. The **Traineeship Track** is dedicated to effective training of STEM graduate students in high priority interdisciplinary research areas, through the use of a comprehensive traineeship model that is innovative, evidence-based, aligned with changing workforce and research needs, and scalable. For this solicitation the Traineeship Track has one priority interdisciplinary research theme — Data-Enabled Science and Engineering (DESE); proposals are encouraged also on any non-DESE interdisciplinary research theme that is a national priority. The **IGE Track** is dedicated solely to piloting, testing, and evaluating novel, innovative, and potentially transformative approaches to graduate education, both disciplinary and interdisciplinary, to generate the knowledge required for their customization, implementation, and broader adoption. Whereas the Traineeship Track promotes building on the current knowledge base to more effectively train STEM graduate students, the IGE Track supports test-bed projects with high potential to enrich, improve, and extend the knowledge base with attention to transferability and innovation. For both tracks, strategic collaborations with the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies, national laboratories, field stations, teaching and learning centers, museums, and academic partners are encouraged.

Cognizant Program Officer(s):

Please note that the following information is current at the time of publishing. See program website for any updates to the points of contact.

- Richard Boone, telephone: (703) 292-4344, email: rboone@nsf.gov
- Claire Hemingway, telephone: (703) 292-7135, email: chemingw@nsf.gov
- Richard Tankersley, telephone: (703) 292-8696, email: rtankers@nsf.gov

Applicable Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):

- 47.041 --- Engineering
- 47.049 --- Mathematical and Physical Sciences
- 47.050 --- Geosciences
- 47.070 --- Computer and Information Science and Engineering
- 47.074 --- Biological Sciences
- 47.075 --- Social Behavioral and Economic Sciences
- 47.076 --- Education and Human Resources
- 47.079 --- International and Integrative Activities (IIA)

Award Information

Anticipated Type of Award: Standard Grant

Estimated Number of Awards: 24 to 30

Anticipated Funding Amount: \$37,880,793

The estimated number of awards under this solicitation is pending availability of FY 2015 and 2016 funds.

NRT Traineeship Track Awards (10 anticipated) are expected to be up to five years in duration with a budget up to \$3,000,000.

NRT IGE Track Awards (14-20 anticipated) are expected to be up to 2-3 years in duration with a budget between \$300,000 and \$500,000.

Eligibility Information

Who May Submit Proposals:

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- **Organizational Limit:**

Proposals may be submitted only by the following:

- Universities and Colleges – Universities and colleges accredited in, and having a campus located in, the U.S. acting on behalf of their faculty members and that award a research-based master's degree and/or a doctoral degree in a STEM discipline supported by the National Science Foundation may submit to the Traineeship Track.
- For the Innovations in Graduate Education Track, the categories of proposers eligible to submit proposals to the National Science Foundation are identified in the Grant Proposal Guide, Chapter 1, Section E.

Who May Serve as PI:

The PI of a Traineeship Track proposal must be on the faculty of the submitting institution.

Innovations in Graduate Education Track: There are no restrictions or limits.

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization: 3

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization: 2 for the Traineeship Track, 1 for the Innovations in Graduate Education Track

Each institution may submit two Traineeship Track proposals and one Innovations in Graduate Education Track proposals. If an institution submits only one Traineeship Track proposal, it can be on either DESE or another theme. If an institution submits two Traineeship Track proposals, *at least one* must be a DESE proposal. In either case (DESE or non-DESE), the traineeship theme of a Traineeship Track proposal must be interdisciplinary.

Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or Co-PI: 1

An individual may serve as Lead Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-PI on only one proposal submitted to the NRT program.

Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions

A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

- **Letters of Intent:** Submission of Letters of Intent is optional. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.
- **Preliminary Proposal Submission:** Not required
- **Full Proposals:**
 - Full Proposals submitted via FastLane: NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide, Part I: Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) Guidelines apply. The complete text of the GPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=gpg.
 - Full Proposals submitted via Grants.gov: NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov Guidelines apply (Note: The NSF Grants.gov Application Guide is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide).

B. Budgetary Information

- **Cost Sharing Requirements:** Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.
- **Indirect Cost (F&A) Limitations:** Not Applicable
- **Other Budgetary Limitations:** Not Applicable

C. Due Dates

- **Letter of Intent Due Date(s) (optional)** (due by 5 p.m. proposer's local time):
 - March 25, 2015
 - Applies to both tracks
 - December 22, 2015
 - Applies to both tracks
- **Full Proposal Deadline(s)** (due by 5 p.m. proposer's local time):
 - May 06, 2015
 - Applies to both tracks
 - February 22, 2016
 - Applies to both tracks

Proposal Review Information Criteria

Merit Review Criteria: National Science Board approved criteria. Additional merit review considerations apply. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.

Award Administration Information

Award Conditions: Standard NSF award conditions apply.

Reporting Requirements: Standard NSF reporting requirements apply.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) graduate education is poised to undergo a major transformation. The drivers for change include recent major national reports that have examined the state of STEM graduate education^[1], the accelerating pace of science and engineering discoveries and technological innovations, national STEM workforce trends, the growing internationalization of science and engineering, and the unrealized potential to align graduate education practices and models with increasing understanding of how people learn. In addition there is increasing recognition that addressing the grand challenges in science and engineering requires interdisciplinary and broader professional training that is atypical for most graduate programs. These realities and the increasing calls for new approaches to STEM graduate education, which are from all sectors and stakeholders, represent an extraordinary opportunity. Accordingly, this NRT solicitation encourages proposals in two tracks — the Traineeship Track and Innovations in Graduate Education Track — to test, develop, and implement innovative and effective STEM graduate education models, promote interdisciplinary and broad professional training of graduate students, and foster fundamental research advances in support of national priorities.

[1] *The Path Forward: The Future of Graduate Education*, Commission on the Future of Graduate Education in the United States, 2010; *Advancing Graduate Education in the Chemical Sciences*, American Chemical Society, 2012; *Biomedical Research Workforce Working Group Report*, National Institutes of Health, 2012; *Pathways through Graduate School and Into Careers*, Council of Graduate Schools, 2012; *Science and Engineering Indicators*, National Science Board, 2014.

II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A. Traineeship Track

1. Focus and goals

The Traineeship Track is dedicated to highly effective training of STEM graduate students in an interdisciplinary research area through a comprehensive traineeship approach that comprises elements that are innovative, evidence-based, aligned with changing workforce and research needs, and scalable. The Traineeship Track is distinguished from other NSF graduate training initiatives by the identification of changing priority research themes, inclusion of both master's and doctoral students, broader definition of trainees, greater budgetary and programmatic flexibility, strong emphasis on the development of transferable professional skills, and explicit preparation for both research and research-related careers. Goals of the Traineeship Track program are to:

- Catalyze and advance cutting-edge interdisciplinary research in high priority areas.
- Increase the capacity of U.S. graduate programs to produce interdisciplinary STEM professionals with technical and transferable professional skills for a range of research and research-related careers within and outside academia, and
- Develop innovative approaches and knowledge that will promote transformative improvements in graduate education.

Creation of sustainable programmatic capacity at institutions is an expected outcome. Proposals, accordingly, should describe mechanisms to institutionalize effective training elements after award closure.

2. Traineeship and trainees

An NRT traineeship is dedicated to the comprehensive development of graduate students as versatile STEM professionals for a range of research and research-related careers within and outside academia. Proposals submitted to the Traineeship Track, accordingly, should focus on and demonstrate strong commitment to technical and professional training of STEM graduate students that emphasizes research training but extends well beyond it. In addition to research training, NRT projects are expected to develop trainees' technical skills broadly, including facility and/or familiarity with the techniques, languages, and cultures of fields integral to the interdisciplinary research theme; foster the development of transferable professional skills; and provide trainees with mentoring and vocational counseling from professionals both internal and external to the NRT institution(s), who have the backgrounds, experience, and skills to advise trainees on how to prepare for a variety of STEM career pathways, including the competencies required and the nature of the professions.

NRT is intended to benefit a population of STEM graduate students larger than just those who receive an NRT stipend; NRT trainees do not have to receive an NRT stipend. An NRT trainee, accordingly, is defined as a STEM graduate student, irrespective of funding source, who is accepted into an institution's NRT program and completes the required NRT elements (e.g., courses, workshops, projects, and other training activities specific to the NRT experience) set by the institution. In order to further maximize the number of students who benefit from NRT, proposers are expected to make available (within capacity and budget limitations) any NRT program elements to STEM graduate students who are not NRT trainees.

NRT trainees must be master's and/or doctoral STEM students in a research-based degree program that requires a thesis or dissertation. If an institution's NRT program includes both master's and doctoral students, the proposal should identify any differences in NRT program requirements, as well as mechanisms to foster the development of a collective NRT graduate student community. NRT stipends and support for customary costs of education (tuition and required fees) are limited to U.S. citizens and permanent residents. However, international students can be non-stipend-supported NRT trainees, or as non-trainees can engage in any elements of an institution's NRT project.

3. Key features of the Traineeship Track

1. Development of innovative and potentially transformative approaches to STEM graduate education, informed by evidence.
2. Extension of individual NRT program elements to non-NRT trainees to benefit a larger population of STEM graduate students across an institution.
3. Dissemination of outcomes and gained insights from NRT training approaches.
4. Facilitation and advancement of potentially transformative interdisciplinary research in areas of high priority to the nation.
5. Comprehensive training of STEM graduate students, including the development of technical and professional skills for both research and research-related careers within and outside academia.
6. Evidence-based strategies to broaden participation of students from diverse backgrounds.
7. Robust formative assessment that is central to the traineeship and routinely informs and improves practice.

4. Research themes

The NRT program has priority interdisciplinary research themes that change periodically. In this solicitation the Traineeship Track has one priority theme — Data-Enabled Science and Engineering (DESE); proposals are also encouraged on any non-DESE interdisciplinary research theme that is a national priority. In either case, proposals should describe the integration of training and research elements and the need for bold and innovative approaches to train graduate students in the targeted thematic area.

a) Data-Enabled Science and Engineering (DESE)

Across all areas of science and engineering, challenging computational problems and data of massive scale and complexity are being generated through experimental methods, observational studies, scientific instruments, administrative records, and computational simulations, leading to a growing need for new interdisciplinary advances in mathematical, computational, and statistical algorithms, prediction techniques, and modeling methodologies, as well as new approaches to data collection, data analysis and visualization, data integration and interoperability, and data stewardship. At the same time, computational models, methods, and algorithms, in the form of rich new software and computing systems, are playing a critical role in the solution of complex computational and data-based problems spanning the science and engineering communities. In light of these advances, NSF recognizes the need to address fundamental challenges advancing computational and *data-enabled science and engineering*, including educating and supporting a next generation of researchers in this space.

Of particular interest for this priority theme are focused interdisciplinary efforts that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- o Partnerships between computational and mathematical sciences as well as all science and engineering domains supported by NSF, driving forward interdisciplinary research by effectively managing, using, and exploiting heterogeneous data sources and models to enable advances in these domains through advances in model-based analysis, data storage and management, analytics, and visualization.
- o Foundational and applied research on a variety of tools essential for advanced scientific and engineering discovery and technological innovation in collaboration with the domain sciences. Such tools could include computational models and the underlying computer science, mathematical, and statistical theory and methodology; novel algorithmic techniques; and effective utilization and optimization of computing and communications resources.
- o Research and development of novel end-to-end science-driven scenarios that integrate and leverage major cyberinfrastructure investments including high-end supercomputers, cloud environments, real-time and remote visualization, provisionable networks, distributed data archives, and software frameworks.
- o Integration of educational and training opportunities with major facilities and infrastructure investments in multiple STEM domains, such as:
 - Ongoing NSF Major Multi-User Research Facilities or other large-scale efforts such as the iPlant Collaborative, Engineering Research Centers (and other center-scale efforts), EarthCube, the Network for Computational Nanotechnology, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), etc.; and/or
 - Cyberinfrastructure-related facilities that are managed by NSF, by other US federal or state agencies, or by international consortia, including Blue Waters and Stampede, XSEDE, Open Science Grid, the Global Environment for Network Innovations (GENI), NSFCloud, and International Research Network Connection (IRNC) sites.

In keeping with the broader goals of the NRT program, proposals responsive to this priority theme should demonstrate significant impact on new curricula and career-focused training approaches for data-enabled science and engineering.

DESE proposals must clearly articulate an overarching interdisciplinary research theme and how the emphasis on computational and data-enabled science and engineering, including the methods and theories of computational and data science, will foster high-return, interdisciplinary synergies.

b) Other crosscutting, interdisciplinary theme

A theme other than DESE should align with NSF or other national STEM research priority areas and have high potential for development of novel, innovative practices in graduate education. Proposers should describe the importance of the NRT project's thematic focus to the nation and the particular need to train students for a variety of careers in that thematic area, whether within or outside academia.

B. Innovations in Graduate Education (IGE) Track

The IGE Track will extend the impact of the NRT Traineeship approach to generate other potentially transformative models for

improvements in graduate education that prepare STEM graduate students for the full range of possible STEM career paths, as well as prepare the next generation of scientists and engineers who will advance the nation's STEM enterprise. The IGE Track is dedicated solely to piloting, testing, and evaluating innovative, new approaches to graduate education and to generate the knowledge required for the customization, implementation, and scaling of the most successful, transformative ones. Master's students or doctoral students or both can be the target population. The IGE Track will not focus on foundational research examining how graduate students learn (see EHR Core Research Solicitation 13-555), but rather will promote pilot efforts that are *informed* by evidence, including findings from learning-sciences research, and that serve as a bridge to broader implementation and scale up. Activities proposed may include, but are not limited to, faculty training, student training, inventive partnerships, virtual networks, student professional development, mentoring, or bridges from undergraduate education to graduate education.

Goals of the IGE Track are to:

- Catalyze rapid advances in STEM graduate education broadly as well as those responsive to the needs of particular disciplinary and interdisciplinary STEM fields, and
- Generate the knowledge base needed to inform model implementation, adaptability, and scalability.

The IGE Track calls for proposals to:

- Design, pilot and test new, innovative and transformative approaches to STEM graduate education,
- Examine the potential to extend a successful approach developed in one discipline or context to other disciplines, or transfer an evidence-based approach to a new context, and
- Develop test-bed projects that are informed by learning science and the body of knowledge about STEM graduate education.

Leadership teams (PI/Co-PIs) comprising professional expertise in the learning sciences and pedagogy, as well as in the principal science domain(s), are strongly encouraged.

III. AWARD INFORMATION

The estimated number of awards under this solicitation is pending availability of FY 2015 and 2016 funds.

NRT Traineeship Track Awards (10 anticipated) are expected to be up to five years in duration with a budget up to \$3,000,000.

NRT IGE Track Awards (14-20 anticipated) are expected to be up to 2-3 years in duration with a budget between \$300,000 and \$500,000.

IV. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Who May Submit Proposals:

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- **Organizational Limit:**

Proposals may be submitted only by the following:

- Universities and Colleges – Universities and colleges accredited in, and having a campus located in, the U.S. acting on behalf of their faculty members and that award a research-based master's degree and/or a doctoral degree in a STEM discipline supported by the National Science Foundation may submit to the Traineeship Track.
- For the Innovations in Graduate Education Track, the categories of proposers eligible to submit proposals to the National Science Foundation are identified in the Grant Proposal Guide, Chapter 1, Section E.

Who May Serve as PI:

The PI of a Traineeship Track proposal must be on the faculty of the submitting institution.

Innovations in Graduate Education Track: There are no restrictions or limits.

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization: 3

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization: 2 for the Traineeship Track, 1 for the Innovations in Graduate Education Track

Each institution may submit two Traineeship Track proposals and one Innovations in Graduate Education Track proposals. If an institution submits only one Traineeship Track proposal, it can be on either DESE or another theme. If an institution submits two Traineeship Track proposals, *at least one* must be a DESE proposal. In either case (DESE or non-DESE), the traineeship theme of a Traineeship Track proposal must be interdisciplinary.

Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or Co-PI: 1

An individual may serve as Lead Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-PI on only one proposal submitted to the NRT program.

V. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

Letters of Intent (optional):

A one-page Letter of Intent (LOI) submitted by the lead institution is recommended for proposal submissions planned for either NRT track. Letters of Intent are not reviewed but are used to gauge review requirements. They are not used as pre-approval mechanisms for the submission of proposals, and no feedback is provided to the submitters.

Submit a one-page LOI through FastLane with the following information:

- The name and departmental affiliation of the Principal Investigator (PI);
- The name(s) and departmental affiliation(s) of the Co-PI(s) and others composing the 10 Core Participants;
- The lead institution and any other participating institution(s);
- Project title: For Traineeship Track proposals, the title should begin with "NRT-DESE:" for projects with a Data-Enabled Science and Engineering theme, or with "NRT:" for projects on a cross-cutting, interdisciplinary theme other than DESE; for Innovations of Graduate Education Track proposals, the title should begin with "NRT-IGE:";
- Synopsis (200-word limit): For Traineeship Track proposals, provide a brief summary of the vision and goals of the proposed training program including a brief description of the interdisciplinary research theme, the main training elements, the integration of the research and training, and the need for the program; for IGE Track proposals, provide a brief description of the graduate education models, approaches, or activities to be piloted and tested, including a brief description of the disciplinary or interdisciplinary needs and/or challenges addressed.
- Keywords: For Traineeship Track proposals, include 4-5 keywords that specify the disciplines and/or themes targeted; for IGE Track proposals, include 4-5 keywords that describe the model, approach, and/or activity to be piloted and tested.

Letter of Intent Preparation Instructions:

When submitting a Letter of Intent through FastLane in response to this Program Solicitation please note the conditions outlined below:

- Sponsored Projects Office (SPO) Submission is required when submitting Letters of Intent
- Name of Co-PI and department affiliation is required when submitting Letters of Intent
- Keywords is required when submitting Letters of Intent
- Submission of multiple Letters of Intent is allowed

Full Proposal Preparation Instructions: Proposers may opt to submit proposals in response to this Program Solicitation via Grants.gov or via the NSF FastLane system.

- Full proposals submitted via FastLane: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the general guidelines contained in the NSF Grant Proposal Guide (GPG). The complete text of the GPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=gpg. Paper copies of the GPG may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-7827 or by e-mail from nsfpubs@nsf.gov. Proposers are reminded to identify this program solicitation number in the program solicitation block on the NSF Cover Sheet For Proposal to the National Science Foundation. Compliance with this requirement is critical to determining the relevant proposal processing guidelines. Failure to submit this information may delay processing.
- Full proposals submitted via Grants.gov: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation via Grants.gov should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov. The complete text of the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: (http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide). To obtain copies of the Application Guide and Application Forms Package, click on the Apply tab on the Grants.gov site, then click on the Apply Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Application Instructions link and enter the funding opportunity number, (the program solicitation number without the NSF prefix) and press the Download Package button. Paper copies of the Grants.gov Application Guide also may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-7827 or by e-mail from nsfpubs@nsf.gov.

In determining which method to utilize in the electronic preparation and submission of the proposal, please note the following:

Collaborative Proposals. All collaborative proposals submitted as separate submissions from multiple organizations must be submitted via the NSF FastLane system. Chapter II, Section D.5 of the Grant Proposal Guide provides additional information on collaborative proposals.

See Chapter II.C.2 of the [GPG](#) for guidance on the required sections of a full research proposal submitted to NSF. Please note that the proposal preparation instructions provided in this program solicitation may deviate from the GPG instructions.

FULL PROPOSAL CONTENT: TRAINEESHIP TRACK

The full proposal must include only the main documents and supplementary documents described in Sections 1-10 below. The page limit for the Project Description is 20 pages. Proposals that are missing required sections and/or exceed the 20-page limit for the Project Description will be returned without review.

1. **Cover Sheet:** A short informative title that begins either with "NRT-DESE:" for projects with a Data-Enabled Science and Engineering theme or with "NRT:" for projects on another interdisciplinary theme must be provided. If international activities are proposed, whether or not they will be funded via the NRT award, the international cooperative activities box should be checked and the individual countries listed. For planning purposes, use September 1, 2015 or 2016 as the award start date.
2. **Project Summary (1-page limit):** Provide a summary description that addresses the research theme, the training plan, and the research-education integration. Specify the expected number of NRT trainees who will receive an NRT stipend, those NRT trainees who will not receive an NRT stipend, and the grand total; also specify whether the program will serve master's students, doctoral students, or both. Each NSF merit review criterion (Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts) must be addressed in a separate statement (see Chapter II.C.2 of the GPG for additional instructions). The summary should be written in a manner that will be informative to STEM professionals working in the same or related fields, and understandable to a scientifically literate lay reader. At the end of the summary, provide 4-5 keywords that reflect the disciplines encompassed by the interdisciplinary research theme.
3. **Table of Contents:** A table of contents is automatically generated for the proposal by FastLane or Grants.gov and cannot be edited.
4. **Project Description (20-page limit):** The Project Description must contain only Sections 4a through 4j described below and cannot exceed 20 pages, including tables and illustrations. The relative attention given in the proposal narrative to the

research and training elements should reflect the principal goal of the NRT program: highly effective training of STEM graduate students in an interdisciplinary research area through a comprehensive traineeship approach that comprises elements that are innovative, evidence-based, aligned with changing workforce and research needs, and scalable.

- a. **List of Core Participants (1-page limit):** Specify, in tabular form, up to 10 core participants, including the PI, Co-PIs, other faculty and senior personnel, evaluator, and external collaborators. Provide name, project role, departmental and institutional/organizational affiliation, and discipline(s). The evaluator must be one of the 10 core participants. The participants listed should be the same ones for whom biographical sketches are included later in the proposal.
- b. **Theme, Vision, and Goals:** Describe the overarching theme, vision, and goals of the proposed NRT with a focus on implementing new approaches to training of STEM graduate students in the targeted high priority interdisciplinary research area, through a comprehensive traineeship. Specify the adopted training approaches or models and the evidence and justification for their inclusion. Clearly describe the integration of the research and training elements. Identify the potential of the NRT project to provide appreciable and meaningful added value to the current degree programs and methods of graduate training at the institution(s). Emphasize specifically the graduate training needs in the project's thematic research field, both at the host institution(s) and nationally. In addition describe the need for professionals with master's and/or doctoral degrees in the NRT project's thematic research area. Articulate how the proposed NRT project will foster valuable interdisciplinary synergisms emerging from ongoing research activities and/or via NRT-funded initiatives, whether the focus is DESE or another theme. Describe how the proposed NRT complements and builds on other ongoing or prior institutional efforts to improve STEM graduate education. Proposers should describe how the NRT project would convey benefits to STEM graduate students beyond NRT trainees and how training innovations from the program will be communicated broadly beyond the institution. Describe the scalability potential for the proposed approaches, including the potential for their customization and adoption by other universities. Address implications of the proposed NRT project for broadening participation.
- c. **Education and Training:** The NRT program focuses on creating innovations in STEM graduate education within a traineeship environment to prepare the scientists and engineers of the future. Describe the traineeship model and its components, including the rationale for their inclusion, and how they are integrated with NRT research activities. The approaches should be innovative, evidence-based, aligned with changing workforce and research needs, transferable, and dedicated to developing versatile STEM professionals. Identify what is lacking in the current approaches to STEM graduate education institutionally and nationally and how the NRT will help meet those needs, both within the participating departments and across the institution(s).

The proposal should describe the STEM graduate population that will be served. Accordingly, the proposal should specify the anticipated numbers of NRT trainees supported with NRT stipends and those NRT trainees not supported with NRT stipends and should provide an estimate of the number of other STEM graduate students expected to take one or more of the NRT project's elements.

Projects must articulate explicit approaches to provide trainees with training and vocational counseling for both research and research-related careers, within and outside academia; preparation and structured use of individual development plans (e.g., myIDP) for trainees is highly recommended. Projects must provide explicit training in:

- Technical skills,
- Communication skills, and
- Other transferable professional skills (e.g., project management, leadership, ethics, teaching, entrepreneurship, teamwork, conflict resolution, and outreach).

Communication training should include minimum competencies and rubrics for measuring proficiency and progress, and mechanisms for regular, structured feedback to trainees. The communications training should prepare trainees to identify and explain the potential benefits and broader impacts of their research discoveries to a range of stakeholders, including policy makers and the general public.

Collaborations with non-academic partners (e.g., industry, NGOs, government agencies, independent laboratories; research, education, and outreach centers; and museums) are encouraged to promote the trainees' professional development. Internships and international experiences are encouraged if they provide marked added value, including authentic mentorship by hosts. If internships are included, proposers should describe pre-internship orientation for trainees and hosts, duration, and expected outcomes. The proposed NRT should foster development of a global perspective, through experiences abroad and/or activities at the home institution(s).

An expectation is that NRT training will span the duration of a student's master's or doctoral program; provide a timeline of logically phased, progressive training elements over the degree program(s). Training should be integrated with degree program requirements so that the anticipated time to degree is not extended.

- d. **Major Research Efforts:** Describe the novel, potentially transformative research that the NRT will catalyze through interdisciplinary synergies emerging from currently funded activities at the institution(s) and/or via separate NRT-funded interdisciplinary initiatives. Explain the need for the proposed NRT research and how it would substantially advance, inform, and transform research beyond funded initiatives already underway at the institution(s). NRT funding should be used to complement rather than supplant other research funding.
- e. **Broader Impacts:** The Project Description must contain, as a separate section within the narrative, a discussion of the broader impacts of both the education and training components and the major research efforts. For further information see Chapter II.C.2 of the GPG.
- f. **Organization and Management:** Present the plans for the organization and management of the NRT project, including the responsibilities of key personnel and reporting lines. Describe how the leadership team will foster a sense of community among project participants (faculty, trainees, the evaluator, staff, and collaborators) through activities and practices. The PI must possess the scientific, teaching, and mentoring expertise and the project management experience necessary to lead and administer the NRT. Projects should include a half- to full-time NRT Project Coordinator as a member of the management team. Proposers should identify formal mechanisms for recurring, substantive communication with administrators (e.g., department chairs, college deans, graduate school dean(s), and others) about the NRT's progress and any institutional barriers.

If a collaborative project is proposed, describe the role of the non-lead institution(s) and its (their) participating personnel, the organizational structure(s), and the mechanisms for project communication. A collaborative proposal should be submitted only if the partner institution(s) has (have) a significant role and substantially enhance the training program. Collaborative projects involving trainees at more than a single lead institution should describe practices to ensure that trainees at the participating institution(s) are equal partners, with strong mentorship and comparable access to training activities.

- g. **Recruitment, Mentoring, and Retention:** Describe plans for recruitment, mentoring, and retention of trainees with a particular emphasis on broadening participation of groups underrepresented in STEM fields. Underrepresented

groups include American Indians/Alaska natives, African Americans, Hispanics, Pacific Islanders (native of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa), persons with disabilities, and/or females. Proposers must provide quantitative data showing the recruitment and retention outcomes of participating departments over the past five years, including time-to-degree completion. Comparisons with national level data are strongly encouraged. The evidence base for the recruiting, mentoring, retention, and broadening participation strategies must be described. Proposers must explain how their processes for admission to the NRT program and their actions to broaden participation will be coordinated with the admissions policies and procedures of the department(s) and university.

- h. **Performance Assessment/Project Evaluation:** Assessment of the project is a high priority for the NRT program. Projects should include plans to evaluate the success of the training. In particular, the proposal should identify specific, expected competencies and outcomes along with performance measures and an evaluation timetable. Although the focus should be on trainees, the evaluation plan should also assess how the NRT project affects faculty teaching and research, academic programs, and institutional policies. Assessments should be both formative and summative, and the plan should describe how and when formative assessments would be shared with the project participants, including trainees, and institutional administration. Describe mechanisms for regular feedback from the evaluator and the trainees to the leadership team and how that feedback informs practice. Awardees should be prepared to contribute to NRT program evaluation, including participation in periodic cross-award, joint videoconferences to share insights, effective practices, and evaluation findings.

Institutions are strongly encouraged to secure the services of a professional evaluator unaffiliated with the lead or collaborating institution(s). If an individual or team from the lead or collaborating institution(s) conducts the evaluation, an external evaluator should be employed to provide formal periodic assessments of the ongoing evaluation. The intent is to ensure that the project benefits from an external perspective. Proposals should include plans for communicating assessment results, both within the NRT community and more broadly through publications and professional meetings. A biographical sketch for the evaluator is required.

An independent advisory committee is required to provide guidance on a regular basis. The committee should provide advice to the leadership team based on the evaluator's findings and other formal and informal information obtained from the leadership team, other participants, trainees, and administrators.

- i. **Recent Student Training Experiences (1-page limit):** Describe the experience of the PI and Co-PIs with leading or participating in STEM education and training over the past five years. Describe any overlap and/or complementarity between the training and the proposed NRT program.
- j. **Results from Prior NSF Support:** The PI and Co-PIs who have received NSF funding (including any current funding) in the past five years must provide information on the prior award(s), major achievements, and relevance to the proposed NRT project. Individuals who have received more than one prior award must report on the award(s) most closely related to the proposal. Complete bibliographic citation for each publication resulting from an NSF award must be included in either the Results from Prior NSF Support section or in the References Cited section of the proposal. For further information see Chapter II.C.2.d of the GPG.

5. References Cited (5-page limit)

6. **Biographical Sketches:** Biographical sketches must be provided for the core participants (up to 10) identified in Section 4.a (see above); no additional biographic sketches are permitted.

7. **Budget and Allowable Costs:** Provide an annual budget for up to five years. FastLane or Grants.gov will automatically generate a cumulative budget. The proposed budget can be up to \$3,000,000 (maximum) and should be consistent with the costs to develop, offer, administer, and evaluate the program elements (e.g., courses, workshops, internships) and the number of trainees supported financially with NRT stipends or otherwise. Direct costs for explicit trainee support and programmatic elements must be commensurate with the goals specified in the proposal. All travel (both domestic and foreign) must be justified. For further information on allowable costs see Chapter II.C.2.g of the GPG.

- a. **Trainee Support:** NRT stipends are intended for those trainees whose research is aligned with the project's research theme. Trainees supported on stipend should be full-time students and receive 12 continuous months of stipend support over an annual period. The NSF minimum contribution to NRT stipends is \$34,000 per year per NRT trainee for a 12-month appointment plus customary costs of education (tuition and required fees). Include trainee support as participant support costs in the budget. NRT trainees cannot be charged for tuition and any other required costs of education while they are receiving an NRT stipend.
- b. **Faculty/Senior Personnel Salaries:** Salary support must be consistent with contributions to the traineeship. Support for postdoctoral fellows is not allowed unless they explicitly have an instructional or other training role.
- c. **Other Budget Items:** Other budget requests (e.g., travel, equipment, and research support) must reflect the training focus of the program, including programmatic elements and non-stipend trainee support. Projects should budget for a half- to full-time NRT Project Coordinator and an evaluator. The budget should include funds for the PI, one trainee, and the Project Coordinator to attend an annual NRT meeting in Washington, DC, plus funds for the PI to attend a one-day orientation meeting for new PIs in Washington, DC.

Budget Justification (3-page limit): The Budget Justification must clearly explain how funds will be used in direct support of trainees and the traineeship program. For proposals with any subawards, each subaward must include a separate budget justification of no more than three pages.

8. **Current and Pending Support:** This should be provided only for the PI and Co-PIs.
9. **Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources (1-page limit):** Provide a description of the facilities and major instrumentation that are available for training purposes. Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited for NRT proposals.
10. **Supplementary Documentation:** One letter, up to two pages in length, from the appropriate senior university administrator is required and should describe institutional support for the traineeship program and how successful programmatic elements and any associated institutional policies and infrastructure will be sustained after award closure. The letter additionally should confirm that NRT trainees on stipend will not be charged for tuition and other required costs of education.

In addition to the letter from the senior university administrator, up to eight other supporting letters, each one page long, may be provided from partner organizations, including international ones, describing their specific contributions (e.g., internships, mentorship, and laboratory access) to the traineeship.

All proposals are required to include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages; it should be included as a separate Supplementary Document with Data Management Plan as the heading. The Data Management Plan should describe how the project would conform to the NSF policy on dissemination and sharing of research results as well as any educational products (e.g., curricular materials). This plan will be reviewed as part of the intellectual merit and broader impacts of the proposal. Data management requirements and plans relevant to specific Directorates, Offices, Divisions, Programs or other NSF units are available on the NSF website at <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>. The PI should follow the data management requirements and plans for the Directorate, Office, Division, Program, or other NSF unit most closely aligned with the research theme of the NRT traineeship. See Chapter II.C.2 of the GPG for further information about the implementation of this requirement.

A Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan is required if postdoctoral fellows receive NRT support, which is allowed only if they participate in an

instructional or other training capacity.

FULL PROPOSAL CONTENT: INNOVATIONS IN GRADUATE EDUCATION (IGE) TRACK

The full proposal must include only the main documents and supplementary documents described in Sections 1-10 below. The page limit for the Project Description is 15 pages. Proposals that are missing required sections and/or exceed the 15-page limit for the Project Description will be returned without review.

1. **Cover Sheet:** A short informative title that begins with "NRT-IGE." If international activities are proposed, whether or not they will be funded via the NRT award, the international cooperative activities box should be checked and the individual countries listed. For planning purposes, use September 1, 2015 or 2016 as the award start date.
2. **Project Summary (1-page limit):** Provide a summary description of the IGE project that addresses the graduate education model or training elements that will be piloted or the existing pilot that will be adopted or expanded, the disciplinary field(s) involved, the knowledge that will be generated to inform implementation and adaptability of transformative approaches to STEM graduate education, and how the project is responsive to a need and/or opportunity. Each NSF merit review criterion (Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts) must be addressed in a separate statement (see Chapter II.C.2 of the GPG for additional instructions). The summary should be written in a manner that will be informative to STEM professionals working in the same or related fields, and understandable to a scientifically literate lay reader. At the end of the summary, provide 4-5 keywords that specify the discipline(s) and/or research theme targeted and the model, approach and/or activity to be piloted and tested.
3. **Table of Contents:** A table of contents is automatically generated for the proposal by FastLane or Grants.gov and cannot be edited.
4. **Project Description (15-page limit):** The Project Description must contain only Sections 4a through 4d described below and cannot exceed 15 pages, including tables and illustrations.

- a. **Innovation(s) in Graduate Education:** Describe the overarching goals of the proposed IGE with a focus on piloting and testing potentially transformative improvements in graduate education. Specify the approaches or models to be piloted and tested, including the target population as well as the evidence and justification for their inclusion. Identify the potential of the IGE project to provide appreciable and meaningful added value to the current degree programs and methods of graduate training at the institution(s) or in the discipline(s). Discuss the potential for extending the approaches and activities nationally and how they could advance evidence-based modernization of graduate education across STEM disciplines.

The proposal should describe institutional plans that address facilitation of the pilot and, equally importantly, how successful approaches, practices, and models will be shared across the institution and nationally.

If a collaborative proposal is proposed, describe the role of the non-lead institution(s) and the participating personnel roles, and the mechanisms for project communication. A collaborative proposal should be submitted only if the partner institution(s) has (have) a significant role and substantially enhance the education model or components tested.

- b. **Broader Impacts:** The Project Description must contain, as a separate section within the narrative, a discussion of the broader impacts of the education and training components. For further information see Chapter II.C.2 of the GPG.
 - c. **Performance Assessment/Project Evaluation:** Assessment of the project is a high priority for the NRT program. Projects should include plans to evaluate the impact of the approach tested to provide transformative improvements in graduate education. Assessments should be both formative and summative, and the plan should describe how and when formative assessments would be shared with the project participants and institutional administration. Proposals should include plans for communicating assessment results, both within the NRT community and more broadly through publications and professional meetings.
 - d. **Results from Prior NSF Support:** The PI and Co-PIs who have received NSF funding (including any current funding) in the past five years must provide information on the prior award(s), major achievements, and relevance to the proposed IGE project. Individuals who have received more than one prior award (excluding amendments) should report on the award(s) most closely related to the proposal. Complete bibliographic citation for each publication resulting from an NSF award must be included in either the Results from Prior NSF Support section or in the References Cited section of the proposal. For further information see Chapter II.C.2.d of the GPG.
5. **References Cited (5-page limit)**
 6. **Biographical Sketches:** A maximum of 10 biographical sketches may be provided, including those for the PI, Co-PIs, faculty, and other senior personnel.
 7. **Budget and Allowable Costs:** Provide an annual budget for 2–3 years total duration. FastLane or Grants.gov will automatically generate a cumulative budget. The proposed budget can range up to \$300,000–\$500,000 and should be consistent with the costs to develop, implement, and evaluate the pilot. All travel (both domestic and foreign) must be justified. For further information on allowable costs see Chapter II.C.2.g of the GPG.
 - a. **Graduate Student Support:** The IGE Track will not support graduate student stipends.
 - b. **Faculty/Senior Personnel Salaries:** Salary support must be consistent with contributions to the project.
 - c. **Other Budget Items:** Direct costs for explicit participant support and programmatic elements must be commensurate with the goals specified in the proposal. Other budget requests (e.g., travel, equipment, and research support) must be integral to goals specified in the proposal.

Budget Justification (3-page limit): The Budget Justification must clearly explain how funds will be used in the proposed project. For proposals with any subawards, each subaward must include a separate budget justification of no more than three pages.

8. **Current and Pending Support:** This should be provided only for the PI and Co-PIs.
9. **Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources (1-page limit):** Provide a description of the facilities and major instrumentation that are available to support the project.
10. **Supplementary Documentation:**

One letter, up to two pages in length and submitted as a Supplementary Document, from the appropriate senior institutional administrator is required and should describe institutional support for the pilot or proof of concept to be tested.

Additionally, up to eight other supporting letters, each one page long, may be provided from partner organizations, including international ones, describing their contributions (e.g., internships, mentorship, and workshops) to the project.

All proposals are required to include a Data Management Plan of up to two pages; it should be included as a separate Supplementary Document with Data Management Plan as the heading. The Data Management Plan should describe how the project would conform to the NSF policy on dissemination and sharing of research results as well as any educational products (e.g., curricular materials). This plan will be reviewed as part of the intellectual merit and broader impacts of the proposal. Data management requirements and plans relevant to specific Directorates, Offices, Divisions, Programs or other NSF units are available

on the NSF website at <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>. The PI should follow the data management requirements and plans for the Directorate, Office, Division, Program, or other NSF unit most closely aligned with the research theme of the IGE project. See Chapter II.C.2 of the GPG for further information about the implementation of this requirement.

A Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan is required if postdoctoral fellows receive NRT support.

B. Budgetary Information

Cost Sharing: Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.

C. Due Dates

- **Letter of Intent Due Date(s) (optional)** (due by 5 p.m. proposer's local time):

March 25, 2015

Applies to both tracks

December 22, 2015

Applies to both tracks

- **Full Proposal Deadline(s)** (due by 5 p.m. proposer's local time):

May 06, 2015

Applies to both tracks

February 22, 2016

Applies to both tracks

D. FastLane/Grants.gov Requirements

For Proposals Submitted Via FastLane:

To prepare and submit a proposal via FastLane, see detailed technical instructions available at: <https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/a1/newstan.htm>. For FastLane user support, call the FastLane Help Desk at 1-800-673-6188 or e-mail fastlane@nsf.gov. The FastLane Help Desk answers general technical questions related to the use of the FastLane system. Specific questions related to this program solicitation should be referred to the NSF program staff contact(s) listed in Section VIII of this funding opportunity.

For Proposals Submitted Via Grants.gov:

Before using Grants.gov for the first time, each organization must register to create an institutional profile. Once registered, the applicant's organization can then apply for any federal grant on the Grants.gov website. Comprehensive information about using Grants.gov is available on the Grants.gov Applicant Resources webpage: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants.html>. In addition, the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide (see link in Section V.A) provides instructions regarding the technical preparation of proposals via Grants.gov. For Grants.gov user support, contact the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or by email: support@grants.gov. The Grants.gov Contact Center answers general technical questions related to the use of Grants.gov. Specific questions related to this program solicitation should be referred to the NSF program staff contact(s) listed in Section VIII of this solicitation.

Submitting the Proposal: Once all documents have been completed, the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) must submit the application to Grants.gov and verify the desired funding opportunity and agency to which the application is submitted. The AOR must then sign and submit the application to Grants.gov. The completed application will be transferred to the NSF FastLane system for further processing.

Proposers that submitted via FastLane are strongly encouraged to use FastLane to verify the status of their submission to NSF. For proposers that submitted via Grants.gov, until an application has been received and validated by NSF, the Authorized Organizational Representative may check the status of an application on Grants.gov. After proposers have received an e-mail notification from NSF, Research.gov should be used to check the status of an application.

VI. NSF PROPOSAL PROCESSING AND REVIEW PROCEDURES

Proposals received by NSF are assigned to the appropriate NSF program for acknowledgement and, if they meet NSF requirements, for review. All proposals are carefully reviewed by a scientist, engineer, or educator serving as an NSF Program Officer, and usually by three to ten other persons outside NSF either as *ad hoc* reviewers, panelists, or both, who are experts in the particular fields represented by the proposal. These reviewers are selected by Program Officers charged with oversight of the review process. Proposers are invited to suggest names of persons they believe are especially well qualified to review the proposal and/or persons they would prefer not review the proposal. These suggestions may serve as one source in the reviewer selection process at the Program Officer's discretion. Submission of such names, however, is optional. Care is taken to ensure that reviewers have no conflicts of interest with the proposal. In addition, Program Officers may obtain comments from site visits before recommending final action on proposals. Senior NSF staff further review recommendations for awards. A flowchart that depicts the entire NSF proposal and award process (and associated timeline) is included in the GPG as [Exhibit III-1](#).

A comprehensive description of the Foundation's merit review process is available on the NSF website at: http://nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/.

Proposers should also be aware of core strategies that are essential to the fulfillment of NSF's mission, as articulated in *Investing in Science, Engineering, and Education for the Nation's Future: NSF Strategic Plan for 2014-2018*. These strategies are integrated in the program planning and implementation process, of which proposal review is one part. NSF's mission is particularly well-implemented through the integration of research and education and broadening participation in NSF programs, projects, and activities.

One of the strategic objectives in support of NSF's mission is to foster integration of research and education through the programs, projects, and activities it supports at academic and research institutions. These institutions must recruit, train, and prepare a diverse STEM workforce to advance the frontiers of science and participate in the U.S. technology-based economy. NSF's contribution to the national innovation ecosystem is to provide cutting-edge research under the guidance of the Nation's most creative scientists and engineers. NSF also supports development of a strong science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce by investing in building the knowledge that informs improvements in STEM teaching and learning.

NSF's mission calls for the broadening of opportunities and expanding participation of groups, institutions, and geographic regions that are underrepresented in STEM disciplines, which is essential to the health and vitality of science and engineering. NSF is committed to this principle of diversity and deems it central to the programs, projects, and activities it considers and supports.

A. Merit Review Principles and Criteria

The National Science Foundation strives to invest in a robust and diverse portfolio of projects that creates new knowledge and enables breakthroughs in understanding across all areas of science and engineering research and education. To identify which projects to support, NSF relies on a merit review process that incorporates consideration of both the technical aspects of a proposed project and its potential to contribute more broadly to advancing NSF's mission "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense; and for other purposes." NSF makes every effort to conduct a fair, competitive, transparent merit review process for the selection of projects.

1. Merit Review Principles

These principles are to be given due diligence by PIs and organizations when preparing proposals and managing projects, by reviewers when reading and evaluating proposals, and by NSF program staff when determining whether or not to recommend proposals for funding and while overseeing awards. Given that NSF is the primary federal agency charged with nurturing and supporting excellence in basic research and education, the following three principles apply:

- All NSF projects should be of the highest quality and have the potential to advance, if not transform, the frontiers of knowledge.
- NSF projects, in the aggregate, should contribute more broadly to achieving societal goals. These "Broader Impacts" may be accomplished through the research itself, through activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project. The project activities may be based on previously established and/or innovative methods and approaches, but in either case must be well justified.
- Meaningful assessment and evaluation of NSF funded projects should be based on appropriate metrics, keeping in mind the likely correlation between the effect of broader impacts and the resources provided to implement projects. If the size of the activity is limited, evaluation of that activity in isolation is not likely to be meaningful. Thus, assessing the effectiveness of these activities may best be done at a higher, more aggregated, level than the individual project.

With respect to the third principle, even if assessment of Broader Impacts outcomes for particular projects is done at an aggregated level, PIs are expected to be accountable for carrying out the activities described in the funded project. Thus, individual projects should include clearly stated goals, specific descriptions of the activities that the PI intends to do, and a plan in place to document the outputs of those activities.

These three merit review principles provide the basis for the merit review criteria, as well as a context within which the users of the criteria can better understand their intent.

2. Merit Review Criteria

All NSF proposals are evaluated through use of the two National Science Board approved merit review criteria. In some instances, however, NSF will employ additional criteria as required to highlight the specific objectives of certain programs and activities.

The two merit review criteria are listed below. **Both** criteria are to be given **full consideration** during the review and decision-making processes; each criterion is necessary but neither, by itself, is sufficient. Therefore, proposers must fully address both criteria. ([GPG Chapter II.C.2.d.i.](#) contains additional information for use by proposers in development of the Project Description section of the proposal.) Reviewers are strongly encouraged to review the criteria, including [GPG Chapter II.C.2.d.i.](#), prior to the review of a proposal.

When evaluating NSF proposals, reviewers will be asked to consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers will be asked to evaluate all proposals against two criteria:

- **Intellectual Merit:** The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and
- **Broader Impacts:** The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

The following elements should be considered in the review for both criteria:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to
 - a. Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
 - b. Benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?
2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
3. Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?
4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?
5. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through the activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project. NSF values the advancement of scientific

knowledge and activities that contribute to achievement of societally relevant outcomes. Such outcomes include, but are not limited to: full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); improved STEM education and educator development at any level; increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology; improved well-being of individuals in society; development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce; increased partnerships between academia, industry, and others; improved national security; increased economic competitiveness of the United States; and enhanced infrastructure for research and education.

Proposers are reminded that reviewers will also be asked to review the Data Management Plan and the Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan, as appropriate.

Additional Solicitation Specific Review Criteria

Additional Solicitation Specific Review Criteria for the Traineeship Track

- **Integration of Research and Education**

Does the proposal address training needs that are not currently available at the institution(s) and/or in disciplines, and are there clear and compelling connections between the training elements and the interdisciplinary research theme?

- **Interdisciplinarity**

What is the degree of interdisciplinarity and the potential for high impact synergies among the disciplines?

- **Professional Development**

What is the breadth and quality of the plan to provide NRT trainees with professional development training for a range of research and research-related career pathways, both within and outside academia?

- **Integrating Diversity into NSF Programs, Projects, and Activities**

What is the quality of the recruiting and mentoring plans to broaden participation?

- **Evaluation**

Does the evaluation plan include outcomes, performance measures, benchmarks, and an evaluation timetable, as well as how formative evaluation will improve practice?

Additional Solicitation Specific Review Criteria for NRT Innovations in Graduate Education (IGE) Track

- **Evaluation**

Is there a well-conceived plan, including tangible metrics, to evaluate the outcomes of the proposed project?

- **STEM education, disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and workforce needs**

To what extent would the project fulfill STEM education, disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and workforce needs?

- **Knowledge generation**

To what extent would the project generate the knowledge needed to inform implementation, adaptability, and scalability of potentially transformative improvements to graduate education?

B. Review and Selection Process

Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation will be reviewed by Panel Review.

Reviewers will be asked to evaluate proposals using two National Science Board approved merit review criteria and, if applicable, additional program specific criteria. A summary rating and accompanying narrative will be completed and submitted by each reviewer. The Program Officer assigned to manage the proposal's review will consider the advice of reviewers and will formulate a recommendation.

After scientific, technical and programmatic review and consideration of appropriate factors, the NSF Program Officer recommends to the cognizant Division Director whether the proposal should be declined or recommended for award. NSF strives to be able to tell applicants whether their proposals have been declined or recommended for funding within six months. Large or particularly complex proposals or proposals from new awardees may require additional review and processing time. The time interval begins on the deadline or target date, or receipt date, whichever is later. The interval ends when the Division Director acts upon the Program Officer's recommendation.

After programmatic approval has been obtained, the proposals recommended for funding will be forwarded to the Division of Grants and Agreements for review of business, financial, and policy implications. After an administrative review has occurred, Grants and Agreements Officers perform the processing and issuance of a grant or other agreement. Proposers are cautioned that only a Grants and Agreements Officer may make commitments, obligations or awards on behalf of NSF or authorize the expenditure of funds. No commitment on the part of NSF should be inferred from technical or budgetary discussions with a NSF Program Officer. A Principal Investigator or organization that makes financial or personnel commitments in the absence of a grant or cooperative agreement signed by the NSF Grants and Agreements Officer does so at their own risk.

Once an award or declination decision has been made, Principal Investigators are provided feedback about their proposals. In all cases, reviews are treated as confidential documents. Verbatim copies of reviews, excluding the names of the reviewers or any reviewer-identifying information, are sent to the Principal Investigator/Project Director by the Program Officer. In addition, the proposer will receive an explanation of the decision to award or decline funding.

VII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Notification of the Award

Notification of the award is made to *the submitting organization* by a Grants Officer in the Division of Grants and Agreements. Organizations whose proposals are declined will be advised as promptly as possible by the cognizant NSF Program administering the program. Verbatim copies of reviews, not including the identity of the reviewer, will be provided automatically to the Principal Investigator. (See Section VI.B. for additional information on the review process).

B. Award Conditions

An NSF award consists of: (1) the award notice, which includes any special provisions applicable to the award and any numbered amendments thereto; (2) the budget, which indicates the amounts, by categories of expense, on which NSF has based its support (or otherwise communicates any specific approvals or disapprovals of proposed expenditures); (3) the proposal referenced in the award notice; (4) the applicable award conditions, such as Grant General Conditions (GC-1)*; or Research Terms and Conditions* and (5) any announcement or other NSF issuance that may be incorporated by reference in the award notice. Cooperative agreements also are administered in accordance with NSF Cooperative Agreement Financial and Administrative Terms and Conditions (CA-FATC) and the applicable Programmatic Terms and Conditions. NSF awards are electronically signed by an NSF Grants and Agreements Officer and transmitted electronically to the organization via e-mail.

*These documents may be accessed electronically on NSF's Website at http://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/award_conditions.jsp?org=NSF. Paper copies may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-7827 or by e-mail from nsfpubs@nsf.gov.

More comprehensive information on NSF Award Conditions and other important information on the administration of NSF awards is contained in the *NSF Award & Administration Guide* (AAG) Chapter II, available electronically on the NSF Website at http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=aag.

C. Reporting Requirements

For all multi-year grants (including both standard and continuing grants), the Principal Investigator must submit an annual project report to the cognizant Program Officer at least 90 days prior to the end of the current budget period. (Some programs or awards require submission of more frequent project reports). Within 90 days following expiration of a grant, the PI also is required to submit a final project report, and a project outcomes report for the general public.

Failure to provide the required annual or final project reports, or the project outcomes report, will delay NSF review and processing of any future funding increments as well as any pending proposals for all identified PIs and co-PIs on a given award. PIs should examine the formats of the required reports in advance to assure availability of required data.

PIs are required to use NSF's electronic project-reporting system, available through Research.gov, for preparation and submission of annual and final project reports. Such reports provide information on accomplishments, project participants (individual and organizational), publications, and other specific products and impacts of the project. Submission of the report via Research.gov constitutes certification by the PI that the contents of the report are accurate and complete. The project outcomes report also must be prepared and submitted using Research.gov. This report serves as a brief summary, prepared specifically for the public, of the nature and outcomes of the project. This report will be posted on the NSF website exactly as it is submitted by the PI.

More comprehensive information on NSF Reporting Requirements and other important information on the administration of NSF awards is contained in the *NSF Award & Administration Guide* (AAG) Chapter II, available electronically on the NSF Website at http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=aag.

VIII. AGENCY CONTACTS

Please note that the program contact information is current at the time of publishing. See program website for any updates to the points of contact.

General inquiries regarding this program should be made to:

- Richard Boone, telephone: (703) 292-4344, email: rboone@nsf.gov
- Claire Hemingway, telephone: (703) 292-7135, email: chemingw@nsf.gov
- Richard Tankersley, telephone: (703) 292-8696, email: rtankers@nsf.gov

For questions related to the use of FastLane, contact:

- FastLane Help Desk, telephone: 1-800-673-6188; e-mail: fastlane@nsf.gov.

For questions relating to Grants.gov contact:

- Grants.gov Contact Center: If the Authorized Organizational Representatives (AOR) has not received a confirmation message from Grants.gov within 48 hours of submission of application, please contact via telephone: 1-800-518-4726; e-mail: support@grants.gov.

IX. OTHER INFORMATION

The NSF website provides the most comprehensive source of information on NSF Directorates (including contact information), programs and funding opportunities. Use of this website by potential proposers is strongly encouraged. In addition, "NSF Update" is an information-delivery system designed to keep potential proposers and other interested parties apprised of new NSF funding

opportunities and publications, important changes in proposal and award policies and procedures, and upcoming NSF [Grants Conferences](#). Subscribers are informed through e-mail or the user's Web browser each time new publications are issued that match their identified interests. "NSF Update" also is available on NSF's website at https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNSF/subscriber/new?topic_id=USNSF_179.

Grants.gov provides an additional electronic capability to search for Federal government-wide grant opportunities. NSF funding opportunities may be accessed via this mechanism. Further information on Grants.gov may be obtained at <http://www.grants.gov>.

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NSF receives approximately 55,000 proposals each year for research, education and training projects, of which approximately 11,000 are funded. In addition, the Foundation receives several thousand applications for graduate and postdoctoral fellowships. The agency operates no laboratories itself but does support National Research Centers, user facilities, certain oceanographic vessels and Arctic and Antarctic research stations. The Foundation also supports cooperative research between universities and industry, US participation in international scientific and engineering efforts, and educational activities at every academic level.

Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities provide funding for special assistance or equipment to enable persons with disabilities to work on NSF-supported projects. See Grant Proposal Guide Chapter II, Section D.2 for instructions regarding preparation of these types of proposals.

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The National Science Foundation Information Center may be reached at (703) 292-5111.

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- **Location:** 4201 Wilson Blvd. Arlington, VA 22230
- **For General Information**
(NSF Information Center): (703) 292-5111
- **TDD (for the hearing-impaired):** (703) 292-5090
- **To Order Publications or Forms:**

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- **To Locate NSF Employees:** (703) 292-5111


PRIVACY ACT AND PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENTS

The information requested on proposal forms and project reports is solicited under the authority of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended. The information on proposal forms will be used in connection with the selection of qualified proposals; and project reports submitted by awardees will be used for program evaluation and reporting within the Executive Branch and to Congress. The information requested may be disclosed to qualified reviewers and staff assistants as part of the proposal review process; to proposer institutions/grantees to provide or obtain data regarding the proposal review process, award decisions, or the administration of awards; to government contractors, experts, volunteers and researchers and educators as necessary to complete assigned work; to other government agencies or other entities needing information regarding applicants or nominees as part of a joint application review process, or in order to coordinate programs or policy; and to another Federal agency, court, or party in a court or Federal administrative proceeding if the government is a party. Information about Principal Investigators may be added to the Reviewer file and used to select potential candidates to serve as peer reviewers or advisory committee members. See Systems of Records, [NSF-50](#), "Principal Investigator/Proposal File and Associated Records," 69 Federal Register 26410 (May 12, 2004), and [NSF-51](#), "Reviewer/Proposal File and Associated Records," 69 Federal Register 26410 (May 12, 2004). Submission of the information is voluntary. Failure to provide full and complete information, however, may reduce the possibility of receiving an award.

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