

Cybersecurity Innovation for Cyberinfrastructure (CICI)

PROGRAM SOLICITATION

NSF 15-549



National Science Foundation

Directorate for Computer & Information Science & Engineering
Division of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure

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

June 02, 2015

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND REVISION NOTES

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:

Cybersecurity Innovation for Cyberinfrastructure (CICI)

Synopsis of Program:

Advancements in data-driven scientific research depend on trustworthy and reliable cyberinfrastructure. Researchers rely on a variety of networked technologies and software tools to achieve their scientific goals. These may include local or remote instruments, wireless sensors, software programs, operating systems, database servers, high-performance computing, large-scale storage arrays, and other critical infrastructure connected by high-speed networking. This complex, distributed, interconnected global cyberinfrastructure ecosystem presents unique cybersecurity challenges. NSF-funded scientific instruments are specialized, highly visible assets that present attractive targets for both unintentional errors and malicious activity; untrustworthy software or a loss of integrity of the data collected by a scientific instrument may mean corrupt, skewed or incomplete results. Furthermore, often data-driven research, e.g., in the medical field or in the social sciences, requires access to private information, and exposure of such data may cause financial, reputational and/or other damage.

Therefore, an increasing area of focus for NSF is the development and deployment of hardware and software technologies and techniques to protect research cyberinfrastructure across every stage of the scientific workflow.

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.

- Anita Nikolich, telephone: (703) 292-4551, email: anikolic@nsf.gov

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

- 47.070 --- Computer and Information Science and Engineering

Award Information

Anticipated Type of Award: Standard Grant or Continuing Grant or Cooperative Agreement

Estimated Number of Awards: 13

Anticipated Funding Amount: \$11,000,000

total funding for the CICI program, dependent upon the availability of funds. Secure Architecture Design awards will be supported at up to \$500,000 total per award for up to three years. Data Provenance for Cybersecurity awards will be supported at up to \$500,000 total per award for up to three years. A Cybersecurity Center of Excellence award will be supported at up to \$5,000,000 total for up to three years.

Eligibility Information

Who May Submit Proposals:

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Universities and Colleges - Universities and two- and four-year colleges (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in, the US acting on behalf of their faculty members. Such organizations also are referred to as academic institutions.
- Non-profit, non-academic organizations: Independent museums, observatories, research labs, professional societies and similar organizations in the U.S. associated with educational or research activities.

Who May Serve as PI:

There are no restrictions or limits.

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:

There are no restrictions or limits.

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

There are no restrictions or limits.

Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions

A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

- **Letters of Intent:** Not required
- **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

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

June 02, 2015

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

The integrity of the scientific workflow from the point of data observation and collection through distribution and analysis and finally, in an archived state, is essential to the success of the scientific process. Network-connected scientific instruments such as telescopes, microscopes and sensing devices collect a tremendous amount of raw information, yet remain vulnerable. They often receive less attention than enterprise systems within a campus or institution. However, unprotected research cyberinfrastructure (CI) and repositories of scientific data, which - especially when compiled - are valuable and vulnerable to theft, present an attractive target of opportunity for attack and compromise. As broader, open access is provided to data repositories and analytic technologies, malicious actors and misuse of databases - particularly those with one-of-a-kind data - can abound. Protection of databases and analytic software tools from deliberate misuse is essential. This solicitation addresses the protection, integrity and reliability of research processes and the resulting information.

II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The objective of the Cybersecurity Innovation for Cyberinfrastructure (CICI) program is to develop and deploy security solutions that benefit the scientific community by ensuring the integrity and reliability of the end-to-end scientific workflow. This solicitation seeks unique ways to protect scientific instruments, resources, cyberinfrastructure and data that extend beyond building better perimeters and point solutions. As funding agencies move toward providing openly accessible data, the possibilities for scientists and engineers to use data sources beyond those created by their own community grow.

The scope of the workflow encompasses instruments, processing software, analysis tools, computing and storage resources as well as information repositories and archives of data. In order to produce accurate results, each data source must be identifiable and trustworthy. Systems must guarantee that data sets cannot be altered, which could potentially modify the analytic outcomes.

CICI comprises three Program Areas outlined below:

1. Secure Architecture Design

As campuses augment their existing research infrastructure with cloud-provided, commercial computing resources or institutionally-shared computing and network resources, it becomes difficult to monitor and control the end-to-end environment.

Collaborative scientific experiments are complex and may include participants from multiple institutions, national labs or organizations physically distributed across campuses, sites or countries. Legitimate users often arrive at scientific experiments and collaborations from a multitude of institutions and with complex access relationships. Complex technical relationships may exist between experiments, institutions and information technology service providers, but security is a shared requirement.

This program area seeks to reduce this complexity by encouraging novel architectural and design approaches, models and frameworks for the creation of a holistic, integrated security environment that spans the entire CI ecosystem. Projects should demonstrate strong security architecture and systems security engineering generalizable across a diverse scientific workflow. Technical solutions should be driven by a scientific community or project.

Proposals are encouraged to include a technical proof-of-concept implementation for the proposed approach.

Some areas of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Technologically innovative uses of the Software Defined Networking (SDN) framework for enhanced network-based security functions across the cyberinfrastructure ecosystem. SDN offers potentially fine-grained control over network functions. Resulting technical implementations are expected to comprehensively address a systems security challenge or improve access control and authentication. Note: This area is not focused on developing SDN security standards; however, implementations that lend themselves to securing elements of the SDN environment are welcome.
- Identity and Access Management (IdAM) systems that ensure trustworthiness. More intuitive, user-friendly methods of providing access are needed as users have grown accustomed to using their social networking identities outside that space. This includes process solutions that require unique technological implementations.
- More robust, efficient and secure transfer of data. With the growing amount of remote instruments and the increasing amount of data being collected from multiple, often remote, wireless and mobile sensors, science is increasingly distributed and virtual.
- New approaches that demonstrate substantive operational improvements in network infrastructure. Key infrastructure services include naming/DNS, secure routing, and other services such as network time synchronization. For all these areas, security standards are available, but few organizations have chosen to adopt and implement them in their networks. As a

result, communication may be misdirected to the wrong data location, a man-in-the-middle attack may modify data in transit, or key data aspects such as timestamps may be invalid.

- Secure interoperability of “cloud”, campus and national cyberinfrastructure resources. The research ecosystem may include commercially-managed solutions. Data moves between the three, often onto machines not controlled by researchers or their institutions. This program area seeks solutions that maximally ensure data integrity in hybrid cloud and on-premises systems.

Proposals must include (a) Systems Architecture diagram(s) of the proposed system. Proposers should document both the logical and physical architectures of the proposed system and describe the system components and interrelationships.

Proposals in this area should be driven by the needs of the science and engineering communities and serve to advance scientific discoveries, collaborations and innovations. Proposers must document explicit partnerships or collaborations with one or more domain scientists, research groups or IT support organizations.

Proposals addressing the area of interest of Identity and Access Management (IdAM) should indicate how they will leverage existing IdAM systems.

Proposals must include as a Supplementary Document a Project Plan of up to 5 pages addressing the goals and milestones for development of the resulting system or framework.

Additional proposal preparation guidance for this category can be found in Section V.A. Proposal Preparation Instructions.

2. Data Provenance for Cybersecurity

The highly distributed nature of international scientific collaborations presents a challenge to ensuring data integrity. The entire chain of data provenance from the point of data collection through processing protocols and software to analytic strategies and results interpretations has become increasingly complex. Because data often come from disparate data sources, securing the provenance from manipulation presents a challenge. As the volume of data from heterogeneous sources continues to grow, the reliability of the data and its associated sources becomes a significant factor in ensuring confidence in the results and reproducibility of experiments. Whereas provenance-aware systems track workflow information, the data itself lack security and privacy controls. Challenges still exist in some basic underlying capabilities to formalizing authenticity of data modified by many parties.

Topics of Interest include:

- A technical proof-of-concept implementation demonstrating assurance that unauthorized parties are prevented from modifying data.
- Provenance schemas that encompass the entire scientific workflow, including collaborative provenance. In particular, an ability to document any action taken upon data by software or hardware in addition to physical and logical or virtual locations the data has traversed is of interest.
- Methods to improve quality checking of citizen science-generated data. The domain of scientists has been extended further as more projects accept input from a wider array of sources. Many scientific projects now include both a general data and a citizen science component. Currently, data from citizen scientists often receive only a cursory quality check.

Proposals must include (a) Systems Architecture diagram(s) of the proposed system. Proposers should document both the logical and physical architectures of the proposed system and describe the system components and interrelationships.

Proposals in this area should be driven by the needs of the science and engineering communities and serve to advance scientific discoveries, collaborations and innovations. Proposers must document explicit partnerships or collaborations with one or more domain scientists, research groups or IT support organizations.

Proposals must include as a Supplementary Document a Project Plan of up to 5 pages addressing the goals and milestones for development of the resulting system or framework.

Additional proposal preparation guidance for this category can be found in Section V.A. Proposal Preparation Instructions.

3. Cybersecurity Center of Excellence

NSF-funded cyberinfrastructure presents unique challenges for operational security personnel. The research environment is purposefully built as an “open” one, in which data is freely accessed among collaborators. As such, sites, centers, campuses and institutions that host cyberinfrastructure must find the right balance of security, privacy and usability while maintaining an environment in which data are openly shared. Many research organizations lack expertise in technical and policy security and could benefit from an independent, shared security resource pool.

A Cybersecurity Center of Excellence must:

- Provide leadership to the NSF research community in the continuous building and distribution of a body of knowledge on the topic of trustworthy cyberinfrastructure;
- Conduct security audits and security architecture design reviews for projects at multiple scales, from large Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction (MREFC) projects to small CI developments;
- Ensure adoption of security best practices in the NSF research community;
- Provide situational awareness of the current cyber threats to the research and education environment, including those that impact scientific instruments;
- Develop a threat model (or multiple threat models if appropriate), identifying the vulnerabilities in NSF-funded cyberinfrastructure and scientific data associated with that cyberinfrastructure and recommending countermeasures to protect the systems; and
- Host an annual workshop in addition to meetings, seminars, training and other events in order to interact with members of the NSF community, industry, government and academia who wish to collaborate on projects and other initiatives.

Awards in this category are anticipated to be in the form of cooperative agreements. Proposals must identify a lead institution.

Proposals must include as a Supplementary Document a Project Plan of up to 5 pages addressing the goals and milestones for the

Center of Excellence over the life of the grant. The Project Plan should address known cybersecurity challenges within the NSF community and identify those challenges affecting small projects, multi-institution collaborations, international collaborations and large facilities. Proposals should identify how those challenges will be addressed by the Center of Excellence. The plan should include an initial set of engagements for year 1.

Proposals should include a description of how the Center of Excellence will address software assurance.

Proposals must address how the awardee will use collaboration tools or social media to disseminate cybersecurity information and best practices to the NSF community.

Additional proposal preparation guidance for this category can be found in Section V.A. Proposal Preparation Instructions.

PI Meetings

The program plans to host a PI meeting every year with participation from all funded projects and other representatives from the research community, government and industry. For all awards, one or more project representatives (PI/co-PI/senior personnel, or an NSF-approved replacement) must attend one PI meeting held during the life of the grant.

III. AWARD INFORMATION

Anticipated Type of Award: Continuing Grant or Cooperative Agreement or Standard Grant

Estimated Number of Awards: 13

Anticipated Funding Amount: \$11,000,000

total funding for the CICI program, dependent upon the availability of funds. Secure Architecture Design awards will be supported at up to \$500,000 total per award for up to three years. Data Provenance for Cybersecurity awards will be supported at up to \$500,000 total per award for up to three years. A Cybersecurity Center of Excellence award will be supported at up to \$5,000,000 total for up to three years.

Estimated program budget, number of awards and average award size/duration are subject to the availability of funds.

IV. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Who May Submit Proposals:

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Universities and Colleges - Universities and two- and four-year colleges (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in, the US acting on behalf of their faculty members. Such organizations also are referred to as academic institutions.
- Non-profit, non-academic organizations: Independent museums, observatories, research labs, professional societies and similar organizations in the U.S. associated with educational or research activities.

Who May Serve as PI:

There are no restrictions or limits.

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:

There are no restrictions or limits.

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

There are no restrictions or limits.

Additional Eligibility Info:

Organizations eligible to serve as lead proposers are restricted to U.S. academic institutions or U.S. non-profit research organizations directly associated with educational and/or research activities. Organizations eligible to serve as non-lead proposers or subawardees are all those organizations eligible under the provisions of the NSF Grant Proposal Guide (GPG).

V. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

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.

The following information supplements the guidelines and requirements in the NSF Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) and NSF Grants.gov Application Guide:

For Secure Data Architecture Proposals:

Proposals in this area require titles that begin with "CICI: Secure Data Architecture:" followed by the title of the project.

All proposals in this area must document explicit partnerships or collaborations with one or more domain scientists, research groups or IT support organizations. Partnership documentation from personnel not included in the proposal as PI, Co-PI, or senior personnel should be in the form of a letter of commitment located in the Supplementary Documents section of the proposal.

Any software development under proposed activities should identify the open source license to be used.

Refer to Section II, Program Description, for additional information about requirements for CICI proposals. In particular, a Systems Architecture Diagram and a Project Plan of up to 5 pages in length must be included as Supplementary Documents.

For Data Provenance for Cybersecurity Proposals:

Proposals in this area require titles that begin with "CICI: Data Provenance:" followed by the title of the project.

Any software development under proposed activities should identify the open source license to be used.

Refer to Section II, Program Description, for additional information about requirements for CICI proposals. In particular, a Systems Architecture Diagram and a Project Plan of up to 5 pages in length must be included as Supplementary Documents.

For Cybersecurity Center of Excellence Proposals:

Proposals in this area require titles that begin with "CICI: Center of Excellence:" followed by the title of the project.

Proposals in this area must include a Project Plan up to 5 pages in length addressing project goals and milestones as a Supplementary Document.

Refer to Section II, Program Description, for additional information about requirements for CICI proposals. In particular, a Systems Architecture Diagram and a Project Plan of up to 5 pages in length must be included as Supplementary Documents.

Supplementary Document (upload the following):

A list of Project Personnel and Partner Institutions is required for submissions to all three Program Areas (Note: In collaborative proposals, the lead institution should provide this information for all participants).

Provide current, accurate information for all personnel and institutions involved in the project. NSF staff will use this information in the merit review process to manage conflicts of interest. The list must include all PIs, Co-PIs, Senior Personnel, paid/unpaid Consultants or Collaborators, Subawardees, Postdocs, project-level advisory committee members, and writers of any collaboration letters.

B. Budgetary Information

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

Budget Preparation Instructions:

Budgets should include travel funds for the project principal investigators and other team members, as appropriate, from all collaborating institutions to attend one annual Principal Investigators' meeting.

C. Due Dates

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

June 02, 2015

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

All CICI projects will be reviewed with careful attention to the following:

- The extent to which the work provides a needed capability required by the science, engineering and education community;
- The expected impact on the deployed environment described in the proposal, and potential impact across a broader segment of the NSF community; and
- The feasibility, utility, and interoperability of the capability in its proposed operational role.

B. Review and Selection Process

Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation will be reviewed by Ad hoc Review and/or 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:

- Anita Nikolic, telephone: (703) 292-4551, email: anikolic@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>.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is an independent Federal agency created by the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended (42 USC 1861-75). The Act states the purpose of the NSF is "to promote the progress of science; [and] to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare by supporting research and education in all fields of science and engineering."

NSF funds research and education in most fields of science and engineering. It does this through grants and cooperative agreements to more than 2,000 colleges, universities, K-12 school systems, businesses, informal science organizations and other research organizations throughout the US. The Foundation accounts for about one-fourth of Federal support to academic institutions for basic research.

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.

The National Science Foundation has Telephonic Device for the Deaf (TDD) and Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) capabilities that enable individuals with hearing impairments to communicate with the Foundation about NSF programs, employment or general information. TDD may be accessed at (703) 292-5090 and (800) 281-8749, FIRS at (800) 877-8339.

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

The National Science Foundation promotes and advances scientific progress in the United States by competitively awarding grants and cooperative agreements for research and education in the sciences, mathematics, and engineering.

To get the latest information about program deadlines, to download copies of NSF publications, and to access abstracts of awards, visit the NSF Website at <http://www.nsf.gov>

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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: | |
| Send an e-mail to: | nsfpubs@nsf.gov |
| or telephone: | (703) 292-7827 |
| • 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.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, an information collection unless it displays a valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. The OMB control number for this collection is 3145-0058. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 120 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions. Send comments regarding the burden estimate and any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to:

Suzanne H. Plimpton
Reports Clearance Officer
Office of the General Counsel
National Science Foundation
Arlington, VA 22230

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