Hydrologic Sciences (HS)

PROGRAM SOLICITATION
NSF 22-540

REPLACES DOCUMENT(S):
NSF 20-560

National Science Foundation
Directorate for Geosciences
Division of Earth Sciences

Full Proposal Deadline(s):

Proposals Accepted Anytime

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND REVISION NOTES

This new solicitation provides:

- an updated synopsis and description of the Hydrologic Sciences program;
- updated guidance on Proposal Preparation, including the data policy and collaboration with international partners and Federal agencies.

Important Information

Innovating and migrating proposal preparation and submission capabilities from FastLane to Research.gov is part of the ongoing NSF information technology modernization efforts, as described in Important Notice No. 147. In support of these efforts, research proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation must be prepared and submitted via Research.gov or via Grants.gov, and may not be prepared or submitted via FastLane.

Any proposal submitted in response to this solicitation should be submitted in accordance with the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG).

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

General Information

Program Title:

Hydrologic Sciences (HS)

Synopsis of Program:

The Hydrologic Sciences Program is a disciplinary program within the Division of Earth Sciences. Hydrologic science has a distinct focus on continental water processes at all scales, and the program supports research with a primary focus on these processes. The program supports fundamental research about water on and beneath the Earth's surface, as well as relationships of water with material and living components of the environment. A major focus is the study of hydrologic processes (e.g., rainfall and runoff; infiltration and subsurface flow; evaporation and transpiration), as well as fluxes of water (e.g. in soils, aquifers, and streams). Many projects involve the study of hydrologic transport (e.g., of dissolved solutes, sediment), coupling of hydrological processes with other systems (e.g., ecosystem processes, geochemical cycles, food and energy systems, socio-ecological systems), or hydrologic responses to change (e.g., changes in land use, climate, or watershed management). Observational, experimental, theoretical, and modeling approaches are supported.

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.

- Hydrologic Sciences Program Inquiries, telephone: (703) 292-8550, email: hydro@nsf.gov
- Laura Lautz, telephone: (703) 292-7775, email: llautz@nsf.gov
- Hendratta Ali, telephone: (703) 292-2468, email: heali@nsf.gov
- Chris Lowry, telephone: (703) 292-2468, email: cslowry@nsf.gov

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

- 47.050 --- Geosciences

Award Information

Anticipated Type of Award:

Standard Grant or Continuing Grant or Cooperative Agreement

Estimated Number of Awards: 20 to 30 annually, pending availability of funds

Anticipated Funding Amount: $12,000,000 annually, pending availability of funds.

Estimated program budget, number of awards, and average award size/duration are subject to the availability of funds and the quality of the proposals. Regular research awards supported by the Hydrologic Sciences program are generally, but not exclusively, in the range of $250,000 to $700,000 and of 2-4 years duration.

Eligibility Information

Who May Submit Proposals:

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) - Two- and four-year IHEs (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in the US, acting on behalf of their faculty members. Special Instructions for International Branch Campuses of US IHEs: If the proposal includes funding to be provided to an international branch campus of a US institution of higher education (including through use of subawards and consultant arrangements), the proposer must explain the benefit(s) to the project of performance at the international branch campus, and justify why the project activities cannot be performed at the US campus.
- 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:

According to the Division of Earth Sciences (EAR) Resubmission Policy, proposals that have been declined are not eligible for resubmission for one year from the original date of submission and must be substantially revised to be considered. Exceptions to this policy require prior approval by an EAR Program Officer.

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 Research.gov: *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) guidelines apply. The complete text of the PAPPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg.
  - 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: https://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:**

  Other budgetary limitations apply. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.

C. Due Dates

- **Full Proposal Deadline(s):**

  Proposals Accepted Anytime

Proposal Review Information Criteria

Merit Review Criteria:

National Science Board approved criteria apply.

Award Administration Information

Award Conditions:

Additional award conditions apply. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.

Reporting Requirements:

Additional reporting requirements apply. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Hydrologic Sciences Program is a disciplinary program within the Division of Earth Sciences. Hydrologic science has a distinct focus on continental water processes at all scales. The program supports fundamental research about water on and beneath the Earth's surface, as well as relationships of water with material and living components of the environment.

II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Hydrological Sciences Program focuses on linking the fluxes of water and the components carried by water across boundaries between interacting components of the terrestrial system, as well as the mechanisms by which these fluxes co-organize over a variety of temporal and spatial scales. The program supports the study of hydrologic processes (e.g., rainfall and runoff; infiltration and subsurface flow; evaporation and transpiration), as well as fluxes of water (e.g. in soils, aquifers, and streams). Many projects involve the study of hydrologic transport (e.g., of dissolved solutes, sediment), coupling of hydrological processes with other systems (e.g., ecosystem processes, geochemical cycles, food and energy systems, socio-ecological systems), or hydrologic responses to change (e.g., changes in land use, climate, or watershed management). The program is interested in how hydrological processes couple to and interact with the geosphere, the critical zone, the landscape, and ecosystems, as well as how the water cycle and its coupled processes are altered by land use and climate. Observational, experimental, theoretical, and modeling approaches are supported.

The Hydrologic Sciences Program is committed to supporting the most meritorious research in any relevant area, including but not limited to: current and future changes to the water cycle in response to global change; how hydrologic processes, water availability, and water quality are altered in human-impacted waterscapes; advancing our capabilities in integrated and realistic modeling of hydrologic systems from pore to continental scales using the full model continuum (from data-driven to process-based); applications of data fusion and assimilation to advance hydrologic sciences; and applications of new technologies to inform understanding of fundamental hydrological processes across scales (e.g. geophysical methods, remote sensing). The Hydrologic Sciences Program is also interested in developing collaborative research with federal agency partners and leveraging capabilities of NSF-supported facilities. Additional information on current research needs in Hydrologic Sciences can be found in the following reports:

- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2020. *A Vision for NSF Earth Sciences 2020-2030: Earth in Time*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/25761.
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2021. *Next Generation Earth Systems Science at the National Science Foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/26042.
- National Research Council. 2012. *Challenges and Opportunities in the Hydrologic Sciences*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Hydrologic science has a distinct focus on continental water processes at all scales, and the program supports research with a primary focus on these processes. Hydrologic science is also linked to ocean, atmospheric, and solid Earth sciences. Further, hydrological processes are crucial for society and ecosystems, and solutions to water issues are often at the interface of disciplines (e.g., environmental science, environmental engineering, or social science). Therefore, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary proposals submitted to the Hydrologic Sciences program may require joint review with related disciplinary or integrated programs and may be considered for joint support. Before submission of a proposal that may cross disciplinary boundaries, principal investigators are strongly encouraged to contact the cognizant Program Officers in all relevant programs.

A broad portfolio of Broader Impacts activities is supported by the Hydrologic Sciences program, as described below in Section VI.A. Successful projects will include creative, well-integrated, and effective broader impact activities developed within the context of the mission, goals, and resources of the organizations and people involved. The expertise of collaborators, the proposal budget, and budget justification should reflect this integration. Example activities might include but are not limited to those that create effective methods of engagement with local communities or the public at large; develop infrastructure in the lab or the field; translate research to benefit broader societal needs; involve early career researchers and students with diverse experiences and backgrounds; and/or foster new partnerships (e.g., with Minority Serving Institutions, two-year colleges, or internationally). Plans for undergraduate and graduate student mentoring should include evidence-based strategies for effective recruitment, retention and/or training to be provided. We welcome innovative efforts that advance belonging, accessibility, justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion or identify and remove barriers that have historically excluded some groups from the geosciences.

Other types of NSF proposals, such as Research Coordination Networks (RCN), Rapid Response Research (RAPID), and conference proposals, must be discussed with a Program Officer prior to submission. Additional guidance on RAPID proposals can be found in the Proposal Preparation Instructions section below.

Projects currently and previously supported by the program can be found by using the NSF Award Search (Program Information) engine and entering Element Code 1579.

III. AWARD INFORMATION

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

Estimated Number of Awards: 20 to 30 annually

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IV. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Who May Submit Proposals:

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) - Two- and four-year IHEs (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in the US, acting on behalf of their faculty members. Special Instructions for International Branch Campuses of US IHEs: If the proposal includes funding to be provided to an international branch campus of a US institution of higher education (including through use of subawards and consultant arrangements), the proposer must explain the benefit(s) to the project of performance at the international branch campus, and justify why the project activities cannot be performed at the US campus.
- 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:

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

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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 Research.gov or Grants.gov.

- Full Proposals submitted via Research.gov: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation should be prepared and submitted in

accordance with the general guidelines contained in the *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG). The complete text of the PAPPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg. Paper copies of the PAPPG may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-8134 or by e-mail from nsfpubs@nsf.gov. The Prepare New Proposal setup will prompt you for the program solicitation number.

- 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: (https://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) 292-8134 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 Research.gov. PAPPG Chapter II.D.3 provides additional information on collaborative proposals.

See PAPPG Chapter II.C.2 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 PAPPG instructions.

The following instructions supplement the PAPPG and the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide:

EAR Data Policy: Principal investigators (PIs) are required to adhere to the EAR Division Data Sharing Policy available on the NSF website. With the goal of making EAR-supported data products findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable (FAIR), key considerations for compliance with the EAR Division Data Sharing Policy include the following:

- EAR's definition of "data" is expansive and includes (but is not limited to) the following: full data sets, derived data products (e.g., model results, output, and workflows), software, and physical collections.
- The proposal Data Management Plan (DMP) should clearly describe what data will be collected, what analyses will be done, when data collection is considered "final," and how and when the project will provide open and timely access to data during and after the project.
- PIs are strongly encouraged to identify long-lived disciplinary repositories most appropriate for the data types to be collected. For many Hydrologic Sciences projects, this can be accomplished using the Consortium of Universities for the Advancement of Hydrologic Science, Inc. (CUAHSI) Data Services , EarthChem, and/or DataONE. However, it is acknowledged that not all data can be accommodated by these protocols. When data are not directly deposited with established catalogues, data should be registered with such catalogs to ensure the highest probability for discovery.

RAPID Proposals: Funding priority for RAPID proposals is for collection of perishable data that requires a rapid response. These proposals must be motivated by compelling scientific questions, present a strong rationale/need for the science, and explain how the unique/unprecedented opportunity to collect data can help address a gap in knowledge. The Hydrologic Sciences Program typically does not fund RAPID proposals with budget requests exceeding $50,000. All budget requests should be only for funds required to collect the relevant data. Faculty salaries, student tuition, and stipends are generally not supported. Costs typically include travel and sample collection costs. Staff or student support directly related to the data collection can be considered. Investigators must contact a Hydrologic Sciences Program Officer regarding RAPID proposals before submission. Additional guidance is provided in PAPPG Chapter II.E.

Projects involving collaboration with foreign organizations and/or work in foreign countries: As stated in the PAPPG, NSF rarely provides direct funding to support foreign organizations and only provides support for the U.S. portion of collaborative projects. If foreign organization involvement is essential to the project, subawards or consultant arrangements may be considered if the foreign organization contributes unique resources not otherwise available, or significant education, training or research opportunities to the U.S. Such information must be provided in the proposal project description. For studies in countries other than the United States, the project description should discuss, where appropriate, collaborations with scientists and students from the host country, and how these individuals will be involved in the project. Collaborations should be well justified, in that they represent true intellectual collaboration and utilize the expertise and specialized skills, facilities, and/or resources of the foreign collaborator. Letters of collaboration must be included in the Special Information and Supplementary Documents section of the proposal. These letters should include a discussion of the role of the collaborator in the project and the resources the collaborating foreign institution/organization will provide to the project. Principal investigators are encouraged to provide U.S. students and junior researchers with international research experiences. Where relevant, arrangements to allocate samples and data between host country organization(s) or institution(s) and U.S. organization(s) or institution(s) should be discussed in the proposal. Investigators are encouraged to include any such permits (including legally required collecting, import, and export permits for samples, instrumentation, and data), authorizations, and agreements, in the Special Information and Supplementary Documents section of the proposal.

Projects involving collaboration with Federal agencies: As stated in the PAPPG, NSF does not normally support activities by individuals employed by Federal agencies or Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs). Proposers who think Federal partners make unique contributions to the research and therefore are eligible for support under the guidelines in the PAPPG must contact the cognizant NSF Program Officer prior to preparing a proposal for submission.

Projects involving Native/Tribal/Indigenous communities: Proposals that include research in Native/Tribal communities or on Tribal lands must attach a letter or email as a Supplementary Document that confirms community collaboration and/or permission to work on associated lands from the relevant community organizations or tribal leadership (see the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Tribal Directory Assessment tool or the National Congress of American Indians tribal directory). Collaborations should be well justified, in that they represent true intellectual collaboration and utilize the expertise and specialized skills, facilities, and/or resources of the community. Collaboration with Native/Tribal/Indigenous communities should be reflected in the proposal budget and budget justification, such as through requests for sufficient funding to support the time and travel of Native community members, and through co-authorship on publications and presentations, as appropriate. Arrangements to allocate and share samples and data with the relevant communities should be discussed in the proposal or in the Data Management plan, following FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) principles for data

management and CARE (Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility, and Ethics) principles for indigenous data governance.

Research Experiences: Projects anticipating the inclusion of Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU), Research Experiences for Teachers (RET), or Research Opportunity Awards (ROA) activities should include those as part of the research proposal. Supplemental funding to existing awards is intended only for unanticipated opportunities that arise during the project.

B. Budgetary Information

Cost Sharing:

Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.

Other Budgetary Limitations:

Equipment needs that can be demonstrably linked to the conduct of a specific research project being proposed to Hydrologic Sciences may be included within the budget of the related research proposal. Equipment requests on proposals submitted to this program should not exceed a total of $50,000. Investigators planning on submitting a research proposal with a significant equipment budget should discuss these plans with the relevant research program officer prior to submission.

C. Due Dates

- **Full Proposal Deadline(s)**:

    Proposals Accepted Anytime

D. Research.gov/Grants.gov Requirements

For Proposals Submitted Via Research.gov:

To prepare and submit a proposal via Research.gov, see detailed technical instructions available at: https://www.research.gov/research-portal/appmanager/base/desktop?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=research_node_display&_nodePath=/researchGov/Service/Desktop/ProposalPreparationandSubmission.html. For Research.gov user support, call the Research.gov Help Desk at 1-800-673-6188 or e-mail rgov@nsf.gov. The Research.gov Help Desk answers general technical questions related to the use of the Research.gov 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: https://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 Research.gov may use Research.gov 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 acknowledgment 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 PAPPG Exhibit III-1.

A comprehensive description of the Foundation's merit review process is available on the NSF website at: https://www.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 *Building the Future: Investing in Discovery and Innovation - NSF Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2018 – 2022*. 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. (PAPPG 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 PAPPG 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 other underrepresented groups 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.

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 generally be completed and submitted by each reviewer and/or panel. 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 https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/award_conditions.jsp?org=NSF. Paper copies may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-8134 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 *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) Chapter VII, available electronically on the NSF Website at https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg.

Special Award Conditions:

Any cooperative agreement awarded in response to this solicitation will contain the following term and condition:

Ensuring Adequate COVID-19 Safety Protocols

(a) This clause implements Section 3(b) of Executive Order 14042, Ensuring Adequate COVID Safety Protocols for Federal Contractors, dated September 9, 2021 (published in the Federal Register on September 14, 2021, 86 FR 50985). Note that the Department of Labor has included "cooperative agreements" within the definition of "contract-like instrument" in its rule referenced at Section 2(e) of this Executive Order, which provides:

For purposes of this order, the term "contract or contract-like instrument" shall have the meaning set forth in the Department of Labor's proposed rule, "Increasing the Minimum Wage for Federal Contractors, " 86 Fed. Reg. 38816, 38887 (July 22, 2021). If the Department of Labor issues a final rule relating to that proposed rule, that term shall have the meaning set forth in that final rule.

(b) The awardee must comply with all guidance, including guidance conveyed through Frequently Asked Questions, as amended during the performance of this award, for awardee workplace locations published by the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force (Task Force Guidance) at https://www.saferfederalworkforce.gov/contractors/.

(c) *Subawards*. The awardee must include the substance of this clause, including this paragraph (c), in subawards at any tier that exceed the simplified acquisition threshold, as defined in Federal Acquisition Regulation 2.101 on the date of subaward, and are for services, including construction, performed in whole or in part within the United States or its outlying areas. That threshold is presently $250,000.

(d) *Definition*. As used in this clause, *United States or its outlying areas* means:

(1) The fifty States;

(2) The District of Columbia;

(3) The commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands;

(4) The territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the United States Virgin Islands; and

(5) The minor outlying islands of Baker Island, Howland Island, Jarvis Island, Johnston Atoll, Kingman Reef, Midway Islands, Navassa Island, Palmyra Atoll, and Wake Atoll.

(e) The Foundation will take no action to enforce this article, where the place of performance identified in the award is in a U.S. state or outlying area subject to a court order prohibiting the application of requirements pursuant to the Executive Order (hereinafter, "Excluded State or Outlying Area". A current list of such Excluded States and Outlying Areas is maintained at https://www.saferfederalworkforce.gov/contractors/.

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 no later than 90 days prior to the end of the current budget period. (Some programs or awards require submission of more frequent project reports). No later than 120 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 Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) Chapter VII, available electronically on the NSF Website at https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg.

Data Reporting Requirements: Principal Investigators of Hydrologic Sciences awards are required to submit active hyperlinks to data and metadata files in the Final Project Report to NSF in the section titled "Products," under Other Products, Other Publications, or Website or Other Internet Sites. Final reports for all awards should include a statement describing how the data policy requirements have been met.

Reporting on Broader Impacts: Investigators are expected to specifically address progress on activities related to proposed Broader Impacts in Annual and Final Reports. Information should be provided in the Accomplishments section, such as in response to questions about opportunities for training and professional development, dissemination of results to communities of interest, and impact on society beyond science and technology. The impacts of these activities should be provided in the Impacts section, such as in response to questions about impacts on society beyond science and technology.

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:

- Hydrologic Sciences Program Inquiries, telephone: (703) 292-8550, email: hydro@nsf.gov
- Laura Lautz, telephone: (703) 292-7775, email: llautz@nsf.gov
- Hendratta Ali, telephone: (703) 292-2468, email: heali@nsf.gov
- Chris Lowry, telephone: (703) 292-2468, email: cslowry@nsf.gov

For questions related to the use of FastLane or Research.gov, contact:

- FastLane and Research.gov Help Desk: 1-800-673-6188
- FastLane Help Desk e-mail: fastlane@nsf.gov
- Research.gov Help Desk e-mail: rgov@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.

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 https://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 (FASED) provide funding for special assistance or equipment to enable persons with disabilities to work on NSF-supported projects. See the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* Chapter II.E.6 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 https://www.nsf.gov

- **Location:** 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22314
- **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) 292-8134
- **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 System of Record Notices, NSF-50, "Principal Investigator/Proposal File and Associated Records," and NSF-51, "Reviewer/Proposal File and Associated Records." 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
Policy Office, Division of Institution and Award Support
Office of Budget, Finance, and Award Management
National Science Foundation
Alexandria, VA 22314

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