

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) about the Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program

[Also includes information on the NSF component of the Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers \(PECASE\) Program](#)

PROGRAM GUIDELINE CHANGES

The CAREER Program offers the National Science Foundation's most prestigious awards for outstanding faculty early in their independent professional careers. To strengthen and enhance the Foundation's support of CAREER, and to ensure that the size and duration of the awards are fully commensurate with the importance of the program, changes have been made to CAREER guidelines in the following areas:

**Eligibility
Award Size
Award Duration**

Under the new guidelines, the Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE), the highest honor bestowed by the United States Government on scientists and engineers early in their independent careers, becomes an entirely honorary award for all NSF recipients.

Changes have also been made in proposal preparation and submission guidelines, including changes in the submission deadline date.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

Proposals must be submitted via FastLane by 5:00 p.m., your local time, on or before the applicable deadline date below:

July 25, 2000 Biological Sciences (BIO)
Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE)
Education and Human Resources (EHR)

July 26, 2000 Engineering (ENG)

July 27, 2000 Geosciences (GEO)
Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS)
Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE)
Office of Polar Programs (OPP)

The official guidelines for submission of CAREER proposals can be found in the publication *Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program Guidelines for Submission of Proposals* (NSF 00-89), available from the CAREER Web page (<http://www.nsf.gov/home/crssprgm/career/start.htm>). The following questions and answers are intended to be helpful supplements to the program guidelines and to provide answers to questions on guideline changes.

The following sections of this document can be directly accessed by selecting the appropriate heading:

1. [ELIGIBILITY](#)
2. [PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS AND FASTLANE](#)
3. [ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAREER AWARDS AND PECASE AWARDS](#)
4. [BUDGET AND AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION](#)
5. [SUPPLEMENTS TO AWARDED GRANTS](#)

1. ELIGIBILITY

Question: Can I apply for CAREER this year if my tenure-track appointment won't officially start until September 2000?

Answer: Yes, tenure-track appointments that start before Oct. 1, 2000 satisfy the eligibility criteria.

Question: I held a tenured position at my former institution, but I am not in a tenured position now. Am I eligible to apply?

Answer: Yes, you are eligible to apply if you are untenured as of July 24, 2000.

Question: I earned my first doctoral degree before October 1, 1992, but my career has been interrupted. Can I apply?

Answer: Possibly, if your career was interrupted for a length of time comparable to that needed to meet the initial date of first earned doctorate and you meet the other eligibility criteria for FY 2001 CAREER submissions. You will need to document your case for receiving an exemption. Prior to submitting a CAREER proposal, the documentation must be submitted to the appropriate NSF authorized approving official with a request for an exemption. Authorized approving officials for this competition are the CAREER Directorate contacts listed in the "CAREER Contacts List" (<http://www.nsf.gov/home/crssprgm/career/contacts.htm>) on the CAREER Web page under "Guidelines and Sources of Information." If an exemption is granted, the full text of the approval received from NSF must be submitted in the **Deviation Authorization** section of the FastLane Proposal Preparation module. The exemption must be included in your electronic proposal submission.

Question: My department (or institution) does not offer tenure, so I am not in a "tenure-track" appointment. Can I submit a CAREER proposal to NSF, and how can I determine if NSF would consider my position as a "tenure-track equivalent" position?

Answer: You may be eligible to apply, but before submitting a CAREER proposal, you must contact and receive approval from one of the NSF CAREER Directorate contacts listed in the "CAREER Contacts List" (<http://www.nsf.gov/home/crssprgm/career/contacts.htm>). See answer above for exemption authorization procedures.

Question: I am employed in my third tenure-track position. Am I eligible to apply under the new guidelines?

Answer: Yes, you are eligible to apply if you meet the eligibility criteria in the FY 2001 program guidelines. The number of tenure-track positions held does not affect eligibility under the new guidelines.

Question: Am I eligible if I work at a two-year college?

Answer: No. Only applicants who will be employed on October 1, 2000 in an institution that awards baccalaureate or advanced degrees in a field supported by NSF may apply.

Question: Am I eligible if I work at a non-profit or non-academic institution such as a museum, observatory, or research lab?

Answer: No. Only applicants who will be employed in a tenure-track position on October 1, 2000 at an academic institution that awards baccalaureate or advanced degrees in a field supported by NSF may apply.

Question: Am I eligible if I have an adjunct appointment at a university?

Answer: No. Only applicants who will be employed in a tenure-track position on October 1, 2000 at an academic institution that awards baccalaureate or advanced degrees in a field supported by NSF may apply.

Question: I am not a U.S. citizen, national, or permanent resident. Can I still apply to the CAREER program?

Answer: Yes, you may apply to the CAREER program if you meet the other CAREER eligibility criteria, including affiliation with a U.S. institution. However, you will not be eligible for nomination by NSF for PECASE unless you become a U.S. citizen, national, or permanent resident before July 24, 2000.

Question: If I have received funds from the Federal Government to perform research, am I still eligible?

Answer: Yes, you may submit a CAREER proposal as long as those funds were not received from NSF in the CAREER or PECASE programs and the proposed research activities of your CAREER application do not duplicate those concurrently supported through other source(s).

Question: I have two great projects. Can I submit two proposals?

Answer: Only one proposal may be submitted to the CAREER program per competition year. If the research topic of the second proposal is considerably different from that described in the CAREER proposal, you may submit a regular research proposal while the CAREER proposal is under consideration. NSF will return a second proposal on a closely related research topic to you without review.

Question: Should I submit my proposal to the CAREER Program, to another special NSF Program, or as a regular proposal?

Answer: Before writing your proposal, it is recommended that you discuss this with the NSF program director who supports research activities in your technical area. Appendix A of NSF's *Grant Proposal Guide (GPG)* (<http://www.nsf.gov/cgi-bin/getpub?nsf002>) lists directorates, divisions, and programs that provide support. For more detailed descriptions of NSF disciplinary programs, refer to the NSF *Guide to Programs* (<http://www.nsf.gov/od/lpa/news/publicat/nsf994/start.htm>). Both of these documents are available from the NSF Web site under "documents online" or from the CAREER Web page. Directorate Web pages also provide program information and may help you in identifying the appropriate program.

Question: Can I have a collaborator listed on my award?

Answer: No. Your research project and/or educational activities can be collaborative, but a CAREER award is intended to enable an awardee to carry out his or her individual career development plan. Therefore, no Co-Principal Investigator may be named and collaborators cannot be analogous to Co-P.I.s. No salary support for other senior personnel is allowed. (See below under "Preparation and Submission of Proposals" for information on appropriate documentation for collaborators.)

Question: I started my first tenure track position in September of 1996. Can I apply to the CAREER program this July?

Answer: No. Along with meeting all other eligibility criteria, your first tenure track (or tenure track equivalent) position must have started on or after October 1, 1996 to apply to the CAREER program.

Question: I previously held a faculty appointment at an institution (in this country or abroad) that does not have tenure track appointments. Does that experience count towards the four years allowed in an academic position stated in the eligibility criteria?

Answer: Yes. Time in a continuing faculty appointment having substantial educational responsibilities (i.e. a tenure track equivalent appointment), either in this country and abroad, does count as time in an academic position. You must have started that appointment after October 1, 1996 to be eligible to apply to the CAREER program.

2. PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS AND FASTLANE

Proposals must be submitted via FastLane. Before preparing a CAREER proposal, refer to the CAREER Guidelines and to the FastLane Web page at <http://www.fastlane.nsf.gov>. Also refer to the CAREER FastLane FAQs and the FastLane FAQs on FastLane proposal preparation which can be found at <http://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/a0/about/a1faq.htm>.

Question: What if my proposal arrives after the directorate deadline for proposal submissions?

Answer: Only proposals submitted by your institution through FastLane before 5:00 p.m. (your local time) on or before the Directorate/Office deadline will be accepted. Since NSF receives nearly 2,000 proposals in the CAREER program each year, you are encouraged to start your FastLane proposal submission well before the CAREER deadline. Refer to the CAREER Guidelines for Submission and the FastLane Web page for more details. **Any CAREER proposal received after the Directorate/Office deadline will be returned to the preparer without review.** Please note that NSF program officers are not authorized to grant extensions to the deadline for the CAREER program.

Question: How do I decide which program to indicate when I get to the "Unit Selection Lists" part of the Cover Sheet?

Answer: Appendix A of NSF's *Grant Proposal Guide (GPG)* (<http://www.nsf.gov/cgi-bin/getpub?nsf002>) lists directorates, divisions, and programs that provide support. For more detailed descriptions of NSF disciplinary programs, refer to the *NSF Guide to Programs* (<http://www.nsf.gov/od/lpa/news/publicat/nsf994/start.htm>). Both of these documents are available from the NSF Web site under "documents online" or from the CAREER Web page. Directorate Web pages also provide program information and may help you in identifying the appropriate program. You **must** identify an NSF disciplinary program in this block for the submission of your proposal via FastLane. If you are unsure where to direct your proposal, you should talk with the program director of the program you think is most closely related to your research. However, if you indicate the wrong program on the Cover Sheet, the proposal will be redirected to the appropriate organizational unit. NSF will make the final assignment of your proposal. *Do not submit a proposal to more than one program. NSF will accept only the first official FastLane submission for each CAREER applicant.*

Question: How many pages should I devote to describing research and how many to education?

Answer: No number is specified. Use the 15 pages allowed for proposal Section C., Project Description Including Results from Prior NSF Support, to describe your career development plan to your best advantage. A major objective of the CAREER program is to encourage the integration of research and education. You may wish to prepare a career development plan that fully integrates these aspects of your academic career, rather than separating them.

While excellence in both education and research is expected, activity of an intensity that leads to an unreasonable workload is not. For instance, teaching additional courses or taking on additional duties is not expected. In fact, a justification for released time may be appropriate for extraordinary curriculum development or education innovation. What is expected is a well-argued and specific proposal for activities over a 5-year period that will build a firm foundation for a lifetime of integrated contributions to research and education.

Question: What should I discuss with my department head? What should be addressed in the department head's one-page statement?

Answer: You should discuss your career development plan and how it fits with the department's and institution's plans, your responsibilities to the department, and the support that the department will give you. Your department head's statement should describe how the department will support your plan and how your plan is integrated into the educational goals of your department and institution. Refer to the CAREER Program Guidelines for Submission of Proposals for information on the content of the Departmental Endorsement statement and other information to be included in the "Departmental Endorsement and Certifications Page." Proposals that do not have the Departmental Endorsement and Certifications Page will be returned without review.

Question: Do I still mail in a signed, original copy of the Departmental Endorsement and Certifications Page?

Answer: No. Scan the signed original of the "Departmental Endorsement and Certifications Page" into the Supplementary Documents section of your proposal. Do not send paper copies of this document to NSF.

Question: Do I still mail in a signed Proposal Cover Sheet (NSF Form 1207)?

Answer: No. For the FY 2001 CAREER competition, the Proposal Cover Sheet (NSF Form 1207, Pages 1 and 2) will be submitted electronically to NSF by the Sponsored Projects Office (or equivalent) at the time of the electronic transmission of the proposal. No PI Cover Sheet certifications will be required for this competition and no paper copy of the Cover Sheet should be sent to NSF.

Question: My proposal involves collaborators. What documentation can I submit to show the collaborative effort?

Answer: The planned collaborative effort(s) should be described in your career development plan. You may also submit a short letter from each collaborator to support the partnerships you have described in the proposal. Scan the signed and dated letter(s) into the Supplementary Documents section of your proposal. A collaborator's letter should not include comments that make it possible to infer that the letter is a reference letter. Letters of reference or recommendation **are not appropriate** and **will not** be sent to reviewers. Do not submit any other documentation such as biographical sketches or other NSF forms for any collaborators.

Question: I would like to submit some additional tabular material that would exceed the 15-page project description page limits. Can I submit this as an appendix?

Answer: The appropriate NSF Assistant Director, prior to submission of the proposal, must approve, in writing, inclusion of additional material that exceeds the 15-page project description limitation. Please note, however, that such approvals are rarely granted. (See GPG, Section II. A. For additional information.)

Question: How do I know if I am in an EPSCoR state, and what should I do if I am?

Answer: The EPSCoR Program currently is operating in 19 states (Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming) and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. If you are submitting from one of these jurisdictions, contact the relevant EPSCoR Project Director to request "certification." Project Director addresses and telephone numbers, as well as general information about the EPSCoR Program and the process for obtaining Certification of Eligibility for EPSCoR Co-funding, are available from the EPSCoR Program Web page at <http://www.ehr.nsf.gov/EHR/EPSCOR/report/cofund.htm>. For a proposal to potentially be eligible for EPSCoR co-funding, a "Certification of EPSCoR Co-funding Eligibility" form (NSF Form 1404) must be completed by the jurisdiction's NSF EPSCoR Project Director in the FastLane Notification of Certification system and transmitted electronically to the NSF EPSCoR Office. **For the FY 2001 CAREER competition, signed copies of this form are not required and should not be forwarded to NSF.**

Question: How do I apply for the PECASE award?

Answer: Each participating Federal agency has its own nomination procedures. NSF will select its PECASE nominees for 2001 from among the PECASE-eligible CAREER awardees who applied for the July 2000, deadline. To be eligible for a PECASE award through NSF, you must submit a CAREER proposal **and** have checked the "PECASE Eligibility" box on the Cover Sheet before submitting your proposal via FastLane. In addition to meeting the CAREER eligibility requirements, PECASE nominees must be U.S. citizens, nationals, or permanent residents who hold that status on or before July 24, 2000. PECASE-eligible CAREER awardees who checked the "PECASE Eligibility" box at the time of proposal submission will be asked to submit supplemental information at a later date.

Question: I am preparing a CAREER proposal for submission to the Division of Research, Evaluation and Communication (REC) in the Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR). What are considered acceptable research activities?

Answer: Research plans submitted to REC/EHR should be oriented toward laying the conceptual foundations and expanding the knowledge base necessary to support the reform of science, mathematics, technology and engineering education. Activities such as software development, hardware development, laboratory-equipment design, instructional-materials development, teacher and informal education may be cited as part of one's education project, but these activities do not satisfy the requirement for research in science, mathematics, engineering, and technology education and, therefore, cannot be the basis for the research plan. CAREER awards should deal with the same general areas of interest discussed in the Research on Learning and Education (ROLE) guidelines (NSF 00-17).

Question: I am preparing a CAREER proposal for submission to the Office of Polar Programs. Do I need any additional information before writing my proposal?

Answer: Before preparing your CAREER proposal, you should refer to the Antarctic Research Opportunities and Proposal Guide (NSF 00-72) or the Arctic Research Program Announcement (NSF 98-72). Both of these documents are available from the Office of Polar Programs Web page (<http://www.nsf.gov/home/polar/start.htm>).

Question: I know that my university has to submit my proposal by 5pm local time but I understand that there is an Administrative Corrections option for the SRO to correct the cover page and budget pages after the submission. How does this impact my meeting the 5pm CAREER proposal submission deadline?

Answer: Your proposal must be submitted to NSF by 5pm local time on the date that is appropriate for the Directorate to which your proposal is being submitted. Your institution has 60 minutes after having submitted any proposal during which corrections to either the cover pages or the budget pages (NSF forms 1207 and 1030) can be made without violating the 5pm submission deadline. Only these forms can be accessed and corrected within 60 minutes of the proposal's submission to NSF without violating the 5pm submission deadline.

3. ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAREER AWARDS AND PECASE AWARDS

Question: When will I be notified of the final decision on my CAREER proposal?

Answer: CAREER proposals are reviewed by different panels and/or mail review held at different times across the Foundation. For this reason, award and declination letters will be issued at different times. Most applicants will be notified by February 2001. You can check the status of your CAREER proposal by accessing FastLane. There is a lag time between when the proposal is submitted via FastLane and when it shows up in the FastLane Proposal Status Inquiry and FastLane Institutional Reports applications. If you have not received notification of a decision on your proposal by the beginning of February 2001, and your proposal status is shown as "pending" in FastLane, you can contact the program or division to which your proposal was assigned to inquire about the status. Your proposal's NSF program assignment can be found in the FastLane Proposal Status Inquiry module.

Question: If I receive a CAREER award in 2001, how will I know whether I am being considered for a PECASE award? When will I hear something if I am to get a PECASE award?

Answer: All CAREER awardees who are eligible for PECASE and who have checked the "PECASE Eligibility" box on their proposal Cover Sheet prior to submission will be considered. Up to 20 of the most meritorious CAREER awardee will be recommended to the White House for consideration for a PECASE award. Recipients will be notified after the Presidential awardees have been selected and approved by the White House. It is anticipated that **notification will not be made** before Fall 2001. No information can be released until such time as the White House announces the awards.

Question: If I receive a PECASE award, what will happen to my CAREER award? What would the PECASE award include?

Answer: Under the FY 2001 CAREER Guidelines, new NSF PECASE awards are entirely honorary and do not provide additional funds. The PECASE award will not change the amount or duration of your CAREER award.

4. BUDGET AND AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

BUDGET INFORMATION

Question: What is an appropriate level of funding to request?

Answer: The minimum CAREER award size, including indirect costs, made during this competition will total \$250,000 over a 5-year period. Proposal budgets should be prepared according to disciplinary practices and the scope of the project. Some NSF directorates, divisions or programs may have a uniform award size. **Applicants to the Engineering Directorate (ENG) should submit budget requests for \$75,000 per year for the five-year duration**, since the ENG Directorate has a uniform amount for all of its CAREER awards. (Applicants to ENG should also refer to the guideline change in the Supplemental

Funding FAQ below.) You can contact your disciplinary program director or the CAREER division contact (see the CAREER Contacts List on the CAREER Web page under Guidelines and Sources of Information) to inquire about appropriate budget requests for your discipline.

Question: In last year's CAREER program announcement there was an upper limit on award size. Does that still apply?

Answer: No. There is no upper limit on award size in the FY 2001 guidelines. As noted in the answer above, some NSF directorates, divisions or programs may have a uniform award size, and the disciplinary program officer or your CAREER contact can provide you with information about an appropriate budget request.

AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Question: Does the duration of CAREER awards still vary from four to five years?

Answer: No. FY 2001 CAREER awards will be for a uniform duration of five years.

Question: Are there any different rules for the administration and reporting requirements of CAREER awards, compared to other NSF awards?

Answer: As with other NSF awards, annual and final reports are required. In addition, each annual report for the CAREER award must provide approval and reaffirmation of the department's endorsement of the work plan and continuing partnership in the individual's career development plan. This approval and reaffirmation of support must be signed by the awardee's department head or equivalent and scanned into the annual report. Annual progress reports should summarize progress in both research and education development and, where appropriate, collaborative activities. The report should also include an update of other support. In all other ways, CAREER awards have the same requirements and options as other NSF awards.

5. SUPPLEMENTS TO AWARDED GRANTS

Question: What types of supplemental funds are available for CAREER awards?

Answer: CAREER awards are eligible for supplemental funding as described in the GPG, Section VI. B.4.

Question: Should I make preparations to obtain matching funds from industry now?

Answer. No. Supplements for industry matching are no longer provided for in new CAREER awards.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

The National Science Foundation (NSF) funds research and education in most fields of science and engineering. Grantees are wholly responsible for conducting their project activities and preparing the results for publication. Thus, the Foundation does not assume responsibility for such findings or their interpretation.

NSF welcomes proposals from all qualified scientists, engineers and educators. The Foundation strongly encourages women, minorities, and persons with disabilities to compete fully in its programs. In accordance with federal statutes, regulations, and NSF policies, no person on grounds of race, color, age, sex, national origin, or disability shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving financial assistance from NSF (unless otherwise specified in the eligibility requirements for a particular program).

Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASSED) provide funding for special assistance or equipment to enable persons with disabilities (investigators and other staff, including student research assistants) to work on NSF projects. See the program announcement or contact the program coordinator at (703) 306-1636.

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 regarding NSF programs, employment, or general information. To access NSF TDD, dial (703) 306-0090; for FIRS, 1-800-877-8339.

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; 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 review process; to applicant 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 needing information as part of the review process or in order to coordinate programs; 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," 63 Federal Register 267 (January 5, 1998), and NSF-51, "Reviewer/Proposal File and Associated Records," 63 Federal Register 268 (January 5, 1998). Submission of the information is voluntary. Failure to provide full and complete information, however, may reduce the possibility of receiving an award.

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 this burden estimate and any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: Reports Clearance Officer; Information Dissemination Branch; Division of Administrative Services; National Science Foundation; Arlington, VA 22230.

The National Science Foundation is committed to making all of the information we publish easy to understand. If you have a suggestion about how to improve the clarity of this document or other NSF-published materials, please contact us at plainlanguage@nsf.gov.