

**NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (NSF)
ESTABLISHED PROGRAM TO STIMULATE COMPETITIVE RESEARCH (EPSCoR)
CONGRESSIONAL REPORT IN COMPLIANCE WITH PUBLIC LAW 114-329: AMERICAN
INNOVATION AND COMPETITIVENESS ACT, SEC. 103 (D) (1-3)
FISCAL YEAR 2019**

This report summarizes fiscal year (FY) 2019 NSF funding to institutions and entities in EPSCoR jurisdictions, as required by the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act Sec. 103(d)(1-3). Specifically, the report itemizes

- (1) a description of the program strategy and objectives;
- (2) a description of the awards made in the previous fiscal year including
 - (A) the total amount made available, by state, under EPSCoR;
 - (B) the total amount of agency funding made available to all institutions and entities within each EPSCoR state;
 - (C) the efforts and accomplishments to more fully integrate the EPSCoR states in major agency activities and initiatives;
 - (D) the percentage of EPSCoR reviewers from EPSCoR states;
 - (E) the number of programs or large collaborator awards involving a partnership of organizations and institutions from EPSCoR and non-EPSCoR states; and
- (3) an analysis of the gains in academic research quality and competitiveness, and in science and technology human resource development, achieved by the program over the last 5 years.

Introduction

EPSCoR utilizes three investment strategies in pursuit of its goal to strengthen research capacity and competitiveness in eligible jurisdictions. These investment strategies are: (1) Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) awards that support physical, human, and cyberinfrastructure development; (2) Co-Funding in partnership with NSF directorates and offices that support individual investigators and groups within EPSCoR jurisdictions; and (3) Outreach activities and workshops that bring EPSCoR jurisdiction investigators together with program staff from across the Foundation to explore opportunities in emerging areas of science and engineering aligned with NSF strategic priorities and with jurisdictional science and technology goals.

EPSCoR Strategies and Objectives (Sec. 103(d)(1)).c

EPSCoR's strategies and objectives in FY 2019 remain the same as those described in the FY 2018 report. Specifically, the mission of EPSCoR is "to enhance research competitiveness of targeted jurisdictions (states, territories, commonwealths) by strengthening STEM capacity and capability." Thus, EPSCoR's goals are:

- To catalyze the development of research capabilities and the creation of new knowledge that expands jurisdictions' contributions to scientific discovery, innovation, learning, and knowledge-based prosperity.
- To establish sustainable Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education, training, and professional development pathways that advance jurisdiction-identified research areas, NSF focus areas, and workforce development.
- To broaden direct participation of diverse individuals, institutions, and organizations in the project's science and engineering research and education initiatives.
- To effect sustainable engagement of project participants and partners, the jurisdiction, the national research community, and the general public through data-sharing, communication, outreach, and dissemination.

NSF Authorizations

- To impact research, education, and economic development beyond the project at academic, government, and private sector levels.

NSF Funding Made Available, by jurisdiction, under EPSCoR (Sec. 103(d)(2)(A)).

In FY 2019, NSF EPSCoR invested a total of \$175.67 million in support of its programmatic activities. Of this, \$144.94 million (82.5 percent) was directed to RII, \$30.61 million (17.4 percent) to co-funding, and \$120,000 (0.1 percent) to outreach activities and workshops. The table below details the investments from EPSCoR resources and EPSCoR investments in co-funding actions.

FY 2019 EPSCoR Funding by Jurisdiction

(Dollars in Millions)

EPSCoR Jurisdiction	RII Program	Outreach & Workshops	EPSCoR Co-funding	EPSCoR Total
AK	\$11.29	-	\$0.96	\$12.25
AL	3.77	0.10	2.63	6.50
AR	-	-	1.37	1.37
DE	7.52	-	1.46	8.98
GU	-	-	0.43	0.43
HI	3.00	-	0.30	3.30
IA	-	-	1.65	1.65
ID	13.39	-	0.51	13.90
KS	1.96	-	1.69	3.65
KY	3.82	-	1.27	5.09
LA	6.04	-	1.98	8.02
ME	7.88	-	0.41	8.29
MS	3.97	-	1.82	5.79
MT	8.30	-	0.78	9.08
ND	-	-	0.76	0.76
NE	8.75	-	1.28	10.03
NH	6.41	-	1.52	7.93
NM	8.20	-	0.84	9.04
NV	0.80	-	1.15	1.95
OK	1.00	-	1.56	2.56
PR	5.72	-	0.62	6.34
RI	9.06	-	1.12	10.18
SC	9.05	-	1.40	10.45
SD	9.83	-	0.09	9.92
VI	-	-	0.30	0.30
VT	-	-	0.54	0.54
WV	6.00	-	0.35	6.35
WY	4.96	-	1.27	6.23
Admin	4.22	0.02	0.55	4.79
Total	\$144.94	\$0.12	\$30.61	\$175.67

Total NSF Funding Made Available in all EPSCoR Jurisdictions (Sec. 103 (d)(2)(B)).

In FY 2019, NSF invested a total of \$915.70 million in support of EPSCoR jurisdictions. The table below details NSF investments in EPSCoR jurisdictions including research support funding, education and human resources, and major research equipment.

**FY 2019 NSF Funding
Made Available to All EPSCoR Jurisdictions
(Dollars in Millions)**

EPSCoR Jurisdiction	NSF Funding
AK	\$62.20
AL	58.99
AR	19.72
DE	41.14
GU	1.21
HI	54.18
IA	45.64
ID	30.77
KS	37.96
KY	32.03
LA	39.21
ME	25.01
MS	24.51
MT	31.49
ND	8.67
NE	41.76
NH	41.95
NM	45.76
NV	25.95
OK	31.12
PR	19.36
RI	56.49
SC	67.59
SD	20.29
VI	2.92
VT	6.12
WV	15.13
WY	28.53
Total	\$915.70

Integration of EPSCoR Jurisdictions in Major Activities and Initiatives of the Foundation (Sec. 103 (d)(2)(C)).

All EPSCoR programmatic activities target integration and assimilation of EPSCoR jurisdictions into the research and education programs of the Foundation’s disciplinary directorates. RII awards promote the coordination and integration of recipient jurisdictions into major NSF programmatic activities. Additionally, EPSCoR consults and engages NSF disciplinary program officers (POs) in merit review processes and post-award evaluations, such as site visits and reverse site visits (RSVs). Site visits and RSVs are intended to provide additional project oversight by allowing jurisdictions to report on the progress of their RII projects in relation to their stated goals and the programmatic terms and conditions. Disciplinary POs assist in the identification of reviewers, serve as site visit and RSV observers, and provide knowledge about the ongoing activities within the directorate that could be leveraged to sustain RII efforts after the performance period of the EPSCoR award.

National, regional, and jurisdictional meetings of the EPSCoR community facilitate grantee interactions with NSF leadership to learn about the Foundation’s strategic priorities and funding opportunities. Participation by EPSCoR researchers and educators in the merit review process across all disciplinary domains of the Foundation, in Committees of Visitors (COV) activities, in external advisory (Federal Advisory Committee Act) committees, and in disciplinary workshops that shape new activities is also vital to this integration.

Outreach to EPSCoR jurisdictions by NSF staff promotes integration of the EPSCoR community into mainstream NSF programs, as does co-funding of awards with the disciplinary programs of the Foundation. There is also an effort to promote in-reach, whereby EPSCoR facilitates opportunities for researchers and educators from EPSCoR jurisdictions to meet with NSF staff at the Foundation's headquarters. In these meetings, the EPSCoR participants are provided with information on NSF strategic priorities and funding opportunities.

In FY 2019, EPSCoR staff promoted engagement of the EPSCoR community in NSF and other national activities. Examples are:

- Convened a regional outreach meeting, "All About NSF Research Center Programs," in Mobile, AL. The event provided extensive information about the various NSF Center programs and was intended to help pave the way for EPSCoR researchers to take the next steps in leveraging their current funding and research to create a culture of sustainability and move onto the next big project. Over 80 participants attended, representing 17 jurisdictions.
- Hosted its annual principal investigator meeting, a two-day event with opportunities for the EPSCoR community and NSF program officers to interact and share best practices in strategic planning, diversity, communication, evaluation, and other areas of importance to EPSCoR jurisdictions and NSF.
- Supported planning for the 26th NSF EPSCoR National Conference, in Columbia, SC, in October 2019. The theme of the conference was *Science and Partnerships across Disciplinary Boundaries* and ~400 faculty, staff, students and postdoctoral scholars from all EPSCoR jurisdictions and RII Tracks as well as interested stakeholders attended.
- Encouraged EPSCoR-supported faculty to participate in NSF committee and review panels across NSF (e.g., COVs, site visits, and merit review panels).
- Continued the RII Track-2: Focused EPSCoR Collaborations (RII Track-2 FEC) solicitation. RII Track-2 FEC builds interjurisdictional collaborative teams of EPSCoR investigators in scientific focus areas consistent with NSF priorities. In addition, these awards have a particular focus on the development of early career/junior faculty. In FY 2019, proposals were invited on the topic of "Harnessing big data to solve problems of national importance," aligned with the NSF Big Idea of Harnessing the Data Revolution, and ten awards were made.
- Continued the RII Track-4, EPSCoR Research Fellows solicitation, which provides opportunities for early career researchers to further develop their individual research potential through extended collaborative visits to the Nation's premier private, governmental, or academic research centers. Proposals in all areas of science and engineering supported by NSF were invited and awards for the FY 2019 competition were made with next year funding.
- Convened two meetings with the EPSCoR Interagency Coordinating Committee (EICC) to share relevant program information and identify opportunities for coordination.

EPSCoR Reviewers (Sec. 103(d)(2)(D)).

Demographics of all reviewers who evaluated EPSCoR proposals or the program in FY 2019 are as follows: of the 114 reviewers, 19 percent were underrepresented minorities, 46 percent were female, 18 percent were from EPSCoR jurisdictions.

EPSCoR Collaborations and Partnerships (Sec. 103(d)(2)(E)).

All RII awards involve collaborations among scientists and engineers in EPSCoR jurisdictions. Additionally, RII awards require institutional collaborations, which are defined as collaborations between researchers at a RII awardee or sub-awardee and those at institutions not receiving any RII funds.

In FY 2019, there were 519 institutional collaborations within EPSCoR jurisdictions; 557 institutional collaborations between EPSCoR jurisdictions and other EPSCoR and non-EPSCoR jurisdictions; and 220 collaborations between institutions in EPSCoR jurisdictions and in foreign countries. These collaborative efforts highlight the vast network of institutional involvement among EPSCoR jurisdictions and their partners in RII projects.

Among the 185 awards co-funded by EPSCoR in FY 2019, 77 involved collaborative research between multiple institutions. Of those 77 collaborative awards, 54 were collaborations between investigators from institutions in EPSCoR and non-EPSCoR jurisdictions.

An analysis of the gains in academic research quality and competitiveness, and in science and technology human resource development, achieved by the program over the last 5 fiscal years (Sec. 103(d)(3)).

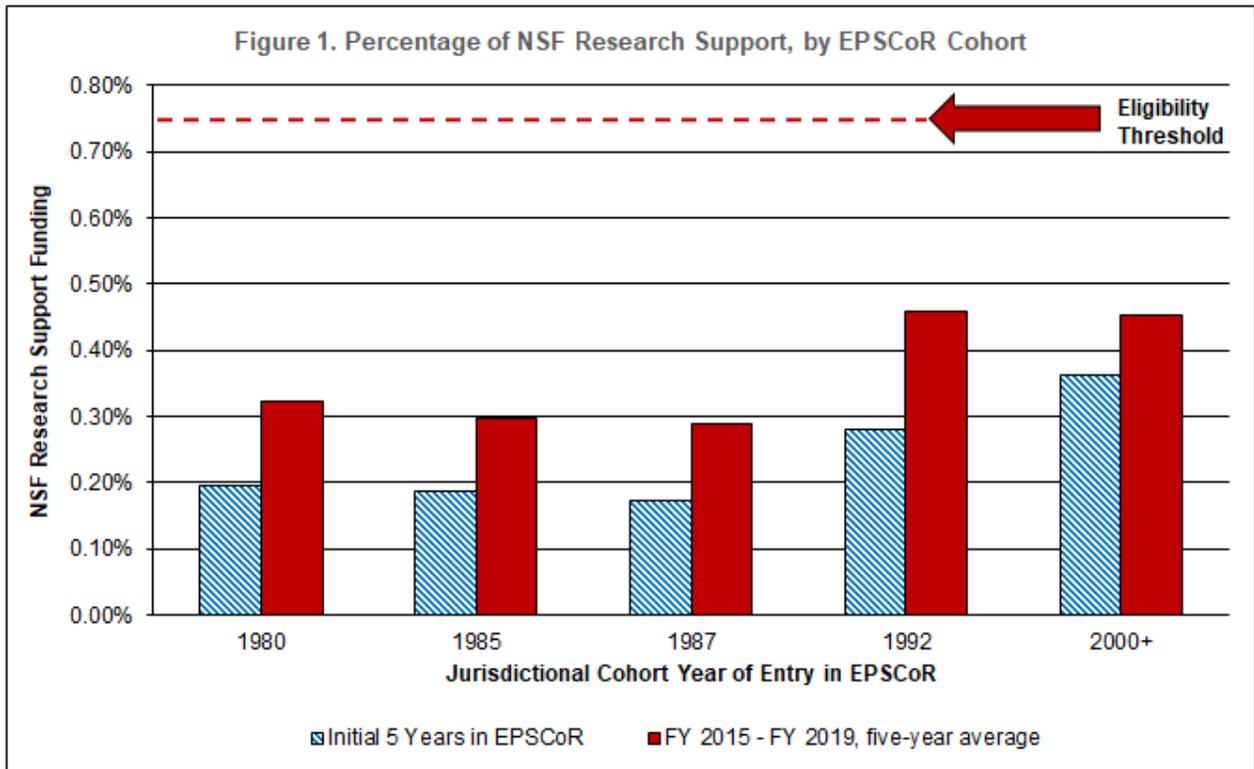
Eligibility to participate in NSF EPSCoR programmatic activities is based upon the jurisdictions' demonstrated ability to obtain NSF research funds. Currently, a jurisdiction is eligible to participate in EPSCoR programs if its level of NSF research support is equal to or less than 0.75 percent of the total NSF research and related activities budget over the most recent three-year period.

Given EPSCoR's aim to stimulate research that is fully competitive in NSF's disciplinary and multidisciplinary research programs, increases in the ability to capture NSF research funds serve as a proxy for gains in research competitiveness. As in FY 2018, former EPSCoR jurisdictions Missouri, Tennessee, and Utah exceeded the 0.75 percent threshold and continued to be ineligible to compete in new FY 2019 RII competitions. In FY 2019, both Iowa and New Mexico, which had both been ineligible in FY 2018, fell back below the 0.75 percent eligibility threshold.

Figure 1 (below) shows the average amount of NSF research funds by cohort for the initial five years (hatched bars) and the most recent five years (solid bars) of their participation in the NSF EPSCoR Program. A cohort is defined as the group of states or jurisdictions that entered the EPSCoR program within a given fiscal year. For example, the 1980 cohort consists of the initial five states that qualified for EPSCoR: Arkansas, Maine, Montana, South Carolina, and West Virginia. For this summary, the 2000+ cohort consists of jurisdictions that entered EPSCoR in FY 2000 or later and are still EPSCoR-eligible for RII competitions: Alaska, Delaware, Guam, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Former EPSCoR jurisdictions Missouri, Tennessee, and Utah are excluded because they were no longer EPSCoR-eligible in FY 2019.

Each cohort shows an increase in competitiveness over the periods of participation. For example, the 1980 cohort shows a 66 percent increase in NSF research funding over the past 39 years of EPSCoR activity. The 1985 cohort (Alabama, Kentucky, Nevada, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Vermont, and Wyoming) demonstrates a 59 percent increase during its 34 years of participation in EPSCoR. The 1987 cohort (Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Dakota) shows a 69 percent increase over the past 32 years, while the 1992 cohort (Kansas and Nebraska) has a 64 percent increase in competitiveness over its 27 years of EPSCoR involvement. Currently eligible jurisdictions participating in EPSCoR since FY 2000 entered into the program at a higher level of NSF research funding than the previous cohorts. For the 2000+ cohort, there has been a small, yet demonstrable 25 percent increase in research funding.

Figure 1. Percentage of NSF Research Support Funding by EPSCoR Cohort



**Percentage of NSF Research Support Funding,
by Jurisdiction and EPSCoR Cohort**

	Initial 5 Years in EPSCoR*	Most Recent 5 Year Period (FY 2015-2019)**
1980 Cohort	0.19%	0.32%
Arkansas	0.10%	0.24%
Maine	0.27%	0.28%
Montana	0.13%	0.34%
South Carolina	0.41%	0.61%
West Virginia	0.07%	0.15%
1985 Cohort	0.19%	0.30%
Alabama	0.33%	0.66%
Kentucky	0.22%	0.38%
Nevada	0.14%	0.25%
North Dakota	0.06%	0.16%
Oklahoma	0.30%	0.43%
Puerto Rico	0.15%	0.17%
Vermont	0.10%	0.12%
Wyoming	0.20%	0.20%
1987 Cohort	0.17%	0.29%
Idaho	0.08%	0.27%
Louisiana	0.36%	0.46%
Mississippi	0.16%	0.28%
South Dakota	0.09%	0.15%
1992 Cohort	0.28%	0.46%
Kansas	0.34%	0.48%
Nebraska	0.22%	0.44%
2000+ Cohort	0.36%	0.45%
Alaska	0.55%	0.57%
Delaware	0.41%	0.42%
Guam	0.02%	0.01%
Hawaii	0.56%	0.61%
Iowa	-	0.74%
New Hampshire	0.44%	0.46%
New Mexico	0.58%	0.63%
Rhode Island	0.70%	0.61%
Virgin Islands	-	0.03%

*Percentages based on eligibility guidelines at the time of entry into the EPSCoR program.

**Percentages based on new eligibility guidelines.

The following table demonstrates the quantifiable outputs of NSF EPSCoR’s RII Track-1 program over the last five fiscal years. This information elucidates the gains in academic research quality over time, as defined by publications, leveraged grants, and patents. For publications, primary support is defined as research that is directly funded by EPSCoR and partial support is defined as use of equipment or facilities funded by EPSCoR. The number and valuation of grants awarded encompass all federal, private industry, and private foundation awards across the U.S. in a given fiscal year for all EPSCoR jurisdictions.

Aggregate of EPSCoR Outputs (n=27*)

	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	Total
Primary Support Publications	581	409	293	404	274	1,961
Partial Support Publications	1,026	927	692	640	458	3,743
Grants Awarded	563	675	455	505	451	2,649
Value of Grants Awarded (Dollars in Millions)	\$181.80	\$379.10	\$492.10	\$269.13	\$214.40	\$1,536.53
Patents Awarded	13	14	17	8	17	69
Patents pending	44	34	29	15	44	166

* The maximum number of jurisdictions with active RII Track-1 awards in FY 2019. Outputs are not comparable from year-to-year due to the influx of new and expiring awards over the time period.

The table below indicates EPSCoR's ongoing support of human resource development over the last five fiscal years in the RII Track-1 program. The number of faculty and students involved in RII Track-1 projects has remained fairly constant over time, signifying a strong commitment by NSF and the jurisdictions in strengthening jurisdictional human capital in science and engineering research and education.

EPSCoR Human Resource Development

	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	Total
Faculty Supported	1,602	1,552	1,183	1,126	1,062	N/A*
Post-Docs Supported	231	200	156	179	165	N/A*
Graduate Students Supported	1,361	1,332	1,056	1,128	992	N/A*
Undergraduates Supported	1,965	1,861	1,220	1,187	1,168	N/A*
New Faculty Hired	89	84	54	27	40	294
Graduate Degrees Conferred	245	258	254	262	202	1,221
Undergraduate Degrees Conferred	408	404	634	357	297	2,100

* The number of faculty and students supported are not summed because many of them remain tied to their respective projects for the duration of the award and would, therefore, be double-counted over time.

In FY 2019, EPSCoR undertook a re-examination of its eligibility methodology¹ to ensure that it is simple, transparent, fair, and stable. NSF is implementing changes that incorporate stakeholder feedback and are supported by robust data analyses. The new eligibility table utilizing the improved methodology will be published in February 2020 and will apply to the FY 2021 EPSCoR competitions. The FY 2020 eligibility will be the same as FY 2019.

NSF EPSCoR is continuing to refine and implement a cohesive Research Competitiveness evaluation framework for the program. This evaluation, once completed in 2020, will address the legislative objective of increasing the research competitiveness of jurisdictions receiving EPSCoR funding by (1) developing a flexible framework to explore, define, and measure research competitiveness in relation to each unique jurisdictional context, and (2) using evidence of jurisdictional progress toward research competitiveness over time for strategic program improvement. The evaluation builds on the findings and recommendations from the EPSCoR retrospective evaluation completed by the Science and Technology Policy Institute in 2012. The contract for this new, forward looking evaluation has been underway since 2017. Key activities to date include identification, merging, and cleaning of data sets, descriptive and correlational analyses, refinement of the logic model for the research competitiveness framework, and development of a data dashboard tool to visualize outputs. The study report is expected to be finalized in April 2020.

¹ Description of redefined EPSCoR eligibility methodology is available at www.nsf.gov/od/oia/programs/epscor/Eligibility_Tables/EPSCoR_Eligibility_Methodology.pdf