

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding the NSF Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) on the  
Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (NSF 20-052)  
April 6, 2020**

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The following FAQs are for use by proposers to NSF DCL 20-052. Given that COVID-19 and the associated impacts continue to evolve, proposers are strongly encouraged to monitor [NSF's website](#) for updates.

**1. Why is NSF offering this DCL?**

NSF's mission is "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and to secure the national defense." NSF-funded research can explore how to model and understand the spread of COVID-19; to inform and educate about the science of virus transmission and prevention; and to encourage the development of processes and actions to address this global challenge. Results from NSF-funded research can inform national and international preparedness and response decision making, and explore lessons learned and best practices for the future.

**2. Who do I contact if I am interested in submitting a COVID-19 related proposal pursuant to this DCL? Is there a deadline by which I must make this contact?**

All questions about the DCL should be directed either to a program officer managing an NSF program with which the research would be aligned or to [rapid-covid19@nsf.gov](mailto:rapid-covid19@nsf.gov). Prospective Principal Investigators (PIs) may contact program officers or this email address anytime. There is no deadline for responding to this DCL; however, NSF is seeking to support research that will address the immediate public health threat of COVID-19. NSF will respond to inquiries received as promptly as possible. Given the volume, prospective Principal Investigators are strongly encouraged to limit their submissions to a single inquiry.

**3. When should I expect to receive a response to my inquiry?**

An appropriate program officer will contact you within a week or so. We would like to be able to get back to you faster, but are currently inundated with inquiries.

**4. Will NSF help me gain access to foreign locales, secure visas, or assist in providing logistical support?**

No, NSF will not be able to help with access to foreign locales, visas, or logistical support for funded projects.

5. **My research requires me to travel to a country with a high volume of COVID-19 cases, but I see the U.S. Department of State has issued a travel advisory to that destination. Can I still submit a proposal?**

Prospective PIs are directed to consult with their sponsored projects offices and the [State Department's Travel Advisories website](#) for guidance about foreign travel prior to formulating a research plan and submitting a proposal to NSF. You may submit a proposal, however you should be aware that successful execution may be impacted by applicable travel restrictions, including the decisions of foreign governments.

6. **Are there any special considerations I should account for when considering research that requires me to engage with foreign counterparts where COVID-19 is, or has been, prevalent?**

Given that businesses and universities are closed in certain parts of the world as a result of COVID-19, it may be more challenging to engage with foreign counterparts. PIs are encouraged to consider, as they develop research plans, that individuals may be directly affected by COVID-19.

7. **Will NSF support research that involves gain-of-function in COVID-19?**

No, NSF does not fund research that would be considered to lead to a gain of function of agents associated with the U.S. Government's policy on dual use research of concern. While COVID-19 is not one of the recognized agents of concern, for purposes of the DCL and RAPID research, NSF will not consider requests for gain-of-function research.

8. **The DCL encourages RAPID proposals that address the immediate impacts of COVID-19. My concept is to instead address a longer-term or more general issue and seeks to understand conditions caused by the outbreak. Is this concept acceptable?**

Yes, NSF will consider such concepts, but not as a RAPID. Prospective PIs are encouraged to contact a program officer managing an NSF program that most closely aligns with the research.

9. **How can I submit my invited RAPID proposal?**

Proposers must submit to NSF *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) (NSF 19-1), select the program that invited the proposal, and indicate that the proposal type is a RAPID. Note that this cannot be done in Research.gov; you have to use either Fastlane or Grants.gov.

**10. How can I know if research that overlaps with my proposed project is already being funded?**

A search of the [NSF awards database](#) using the reference code 096Z or the keyword “covid” will generate a list of current RAPID awards. Be aware that these are only the awards that have been funded. Additional proposals may be under consideration, so even if the award search does not return an award that overlaps with your proposed research, a program officer may inform you that your project idea is not considered novel.

**11. What is meant by “non-medical, non-clinical-care research”?**

Any research that involves the development or testing of vaccines or other therapeutics is considered medical research, even if it does not involve actual human testing. All such research proposals should be referred to the NIH. If you have a current NIH award, please see Emergency Competitive Revision FOA (PA-20-135).

**12. What about mental health research?**

Research about general mental health is accepted by programs in the Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences. However, they do not fund work on mental diseases or mental disorders. All such research should be referred to the [National Institute of Mental Health](#). If you have a current NIH award, please see Emergency Competitive Revision FOA (PA-20-135).

**13. What about research on medical conditions that are not a direct result of COVID-19?**

As with other medical research, that should be referred to NIH. If you have a current NIH award, please see Emergency Competitive Revision FOA (PA-20-135).

**14. I am from a small business; can I apply under this DCL?**

If your project involves a small business, please review the recently released Dear Colleague Letter NSF 20-065 Request for SBIR/STTR Phase I Proposals Addressing COVID-19. This will provide instructions for submitting NSF SBIR or STTR proposals addressing COVID-19. If you have questions about that DCL, please direct them to [sbir@nsf.gov](mailto:sbir@nsf.gov).

**15. I have a great idea; should I just go ahead and submit a RAPID proposal?**

No. Before you can apply, you have to be invited. Please send your idea to a program officer managing an NSF program with which the research would be aligned or to [rapid-covid19@nsf.gov](mailto:rapid-covid19@nsf.gov).

**16. I am at a foreign organization; can I apply for RAPID funding under this DCL?**

NSF rarely provides direct funding support to foreign organizations. NSF will consider proposals for cooperative projects involving U.S. and foreign organizations, provided support is requested only for the U.S. portion of the collaborative effort. If you have a U.S. collaborator, you should talk to that person and have them contact us.

**17. Can we collaborate with foreign partners on COVID-19 related RAPIDs?**

Yes, international collaboration is encouraged with collaborators from a wide range of countries. Several countries are providing funds for international collaborative research, some specifically in partnership with U.S. research communities. A program officer can advise you on allowable expenses for your international collaborator. For more information about international collaboration opportunities and/or if you have ideas about how to integrate NSF-funded efforts with those around the world, please direct your inquiry to [rapid-covid19@nsf.gov](mailto:rapid-covid19@nsf.gov) and put "INTERNATIONAL" in the subject line of your email.