

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding the NSF Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) on the
Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (NSF 20-052)
May 29, 2020**

NSF has archived the DCL on the coronavirus disease 2019 (NSF 20-052). The following FAQs provide additional information about the DCL archiving, along with guidance for prospective Principal Investigators (PIs) interested in performing COVID-19-related research. Given that COVID-19 and the associated impacts continue to evolve, proposers are strongly encouraged to monitor the NSF website for updates.

1. Why has NSF archived DCL NSF 20-052?

NSF issued DCL NSF 20-052 in the first week of March 2020 and has since received thousands of inquiries for research support via the rapid response research (RAPID) proposal type. In response, NSF will make approximately 500 COVID-19 awards, mostly as RAPIDs that provide support for a single year. Archiving the DCL recognizes the limitations on the type and scale of research that can be supported by the RAPID proposal type. NSF now seeks to enable broader-scope projects that build on the knowledge already acquired, and that sustain greater collaboration and coordination activities. NSF encourages PIs to explore existing funding opportunities across NSF and to contact the cognizant NSF Program Officers for relevant programs; NSF remains open to inquiries concerning COVID-19 research in response to existing programs.

2. Whom do I contact if I am still interested in submitting a COVID-19-related proposal?

The e-mail address provided in NSF 20-052 is no longer being monitored. All questions about COVID-19-related research should be addressed directly to a cognizant NSF Program Officer for the NSF program with which the research would be most closely aligned.

PIs are advised that NSF has already received many COVID-19-related inquiries for RAPID research (see the current list of COVID-19-related RAPID awards [here](#)); if requesting this type of funding for COVID-19-related research, the PI should clearly articulate what distinguishes their proposed research from previously funded COVID-19-related RAPID awards.

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

[Here](#) is a list of current relevant awards. Note that, while these are the projects that have been funded to date, additional proposals may be actively under consideration.

4. I have a great idea; should I just go ahead and submit a proposal?

Before you submit a proposal, you should read the NSF *Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG)* and the relevant funding opportunity for the program to which you are planning to apply. Prior to preparing a full proposal, you are strongly encouraged to discuss your idea with a cognizant NSF Program Officer for the NSF program with which the research would be most closely aligned. Note that if applying for a RAPID, EARly-concept Grant for Exploratory Research (EAGER), or

Research Advanced by Interdisciplinary Science and Engineering (RAISE) award, you must be invited by a cognizant NSF Program Officer prior to submission of the proposal.

5. 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 National Institutes of Health (NIH). Please refer to the [NIH COVID-19 resource page](#) for additional information, including relevant funding opportunities.

6. What about mental and behavioral health research?

Research about general mental and behavioral health may be relevant to programs in the Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE). However, SBE does not fund clinical research or work on psychiatric disorders. Investigators conducting research such as this should consult the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) or Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) at NIH. If you have a current NIH award, please see Emergency Competitive Revision FOA (PA-20-135).

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

As with other medical research, research on medical conditions should be referred to NIH. Please refer to the [NIH COVID-19 resource page](#) for additional information, including relevant funding opportunities.

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

The e-mail address provided in the archived DCL, NSF 20-052, is no longer being monitored. All questions about COVID-19-related research should be addressed directly to a cognizant NSF Program Officer for the NSF program with which the research would be most closely aligned. Program Officers will respond as quickly as possible to submitted inquiries, typically within a week.

9. I am part of a small business and need support for research and development of a new product, process, or service that might impact the COVID-19 crisis. How can NSF help?

If your project involves a small business that is seeking to develop an innovative new product or service, the SBIR or STTR mechanisms might be appropriate. The Dear Colleague Letter *Request for SBIR/STTR Phase I Proposals Addressing COVID-19* (NSF 20-065) has also been archived. However, the SBIR/STTR program continues to welcome new projects focused on COVID-19 and will fold projects into its existing Phase I solicitations and review processes (see [SBIR](#) and [STTR](#)). For more information, please review the related Frequently Asked Questions or contact sbir@nsf.gov. Submitting a Project [Pitch](#) is the best way to gauge whether your project might be a fit for these programs and to get feedback from a Program Director.

10. I am interested in obtaining funds for development of biomedical technologies for COVID-19. Will NSF provide funds for this?

NSF continues to fund fundamental engineering research that can lead to new biomedical technologies. If your project focuses specifically on development of biomedical technologies for COVID-19, please review the Notice of Special Interest (NOSI) that NIH recently released, [Development of Biomedical Technologies for Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). This notice may provide appropriate funding opportunities for your research.

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

NSF will not help with access to foreign locales, visas, or logistical support for funded projects.

12. 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, if invited, however you should be aware that successful execution may be impacted by applicable travel restrictions, including the decisions of foreign governments.

13. Are there any special considerations that 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 institutions of higher education are closed in certain parts of the world as a result of COVID-19, it may be challenging to engage with foreign counterparts. Investigators are encouraged to consider, as they develop research plans, that individuals may be directly affected by COVID-19.

14. 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 the virus causing COVID-19 is not one of the recognized agents of concern, NSF will not consider requests for gain-of-function research in coronavirus.

15. The DCL encouraged 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?

The reason that NSF archived the DCL is specifically to encourage such concepts. Prospective investigators are encouraged to contact a Program Officer managing an NSF program that most closely aligns with the research.

16. I am at a foreign organization; can I apply for NSF funding?

NSF rarely provides direct funding support to foreign organizations (see *PAPPG* Chapter I.E.6 for details). 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 proposals?

International collaboration is encouraged with collaborators from a wide range of countries. Several countries are providing funding 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.

18. Does the budget request limit for RAPIDs, EAGERs, RAISEs, and in some solicitations apply to total costs, or to direct costs only?

In most cases, the budget limits that NSF specifies for proposals correspond to total costs (please refer to individual solicitations for any specific limitations or restrictions). However, the award size must be consistent with the project scope and of comparable size to grants in similar areas.