Dear Colleague,

We are writing to inquire about your interest and availability to review proposals submitted to the National Science Foundation’s Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) Research Infrastructure Improvement Program: Bridging EPSCoR Communities (RII-BEC) program in response to our solicitation NSF 22-536.

EPSCoR is designed to fulfill the mandate of NSF to promote scientific progress nationwide. Jurisdictions are eligible to participate in the NSF EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) Program based on their level of total NSF support over their most recent five years (see RII eligibility). Through this program, NSF facilitates the establishment of partnerships among academic institutions and organizations in governmental, non-profit, and commercial or industrial sectors that are designed to effect sustainable improvements in a jurisdiction's research infrastructure, Research and Development (R&D) capacity, and hence, its R&D competitiveness.

NSF has established the RII-BEC initiative in response to the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. This initiative seeks to enable institutions in EPSCoR jurisdictions to set up bridge programs to facilitate the transitions of Affected Groups (e.g., women, underrepresented groups, research trainees, and graduate fellows) from one stage of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) training to the next, with particular focus on providing support for individuals from groups underrepresented in STEM and those transitioning from or to minority-serving institutions (MSIs) within EPSCoR jurisdictions. The initiative will accept proposals that support those individuals most strongly affected by the pandemic at vulnerable career transition points (e.g., first two years of college, or preparation for entry into graduate programs and/or the STEM workforce) within EPSCoR jurisdictions.

This is an “informal inquiry” only because we comprise panels by combining and balancing various factors, (such as geographical, institutional, and demographic diversity, STEM disciplinary expertise, business/industry contacts and administrative expertise) so being added to the potential reviewer pool is not a guarantee of later receiving an official invitation to review proposals. However, if you don’t provide us with the requested information then we cannot formally invite you to review. The formal, automated invitation will have much more detailed information (such as reimbursement logistics) and include information providing access to the actual proposals you will be tasked with reviewing. That information will be forthcoming once the FY22 EPSCoR proposals have been received.

If you are interested in serving on a virtual 2-day review panel for the RII-BEC initiative, please fill out the information at the SurveyMonkey link found below as soon as possible. Survey replies received by Thursday, April 14, 2022 are more likely to be fully considered for all of the available sessions, although responses will continue to be tallied until all panels have been scheduled. You are encouraged to share this e-mail with your colleagues who you believe could serve as excellent reviewers. Possible panel dates are included in the content of the survey.

The link is: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/D7KH8KD

Thank you in advance for your prompt response to this inquiry of your availability to review EPSCoR RII-BEC proposals this year! We appreciate your willingness to serve the EPSCoR community in this capacity.

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