EPSCoR Research Infrastructure Improvement Track 1

(RII Track-1)

Informational Webinar

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Webinar Purpose

- The goal for today is to inform the community about the recently released EPSCoR RII Track-1 solicitation.

  - Focus is on changes and potential pitfalls; it is <u>*not*</u> a comprehensive discussion of every detail in the solicitation.

- NSF 19-580 was released April 30, 2019

  - https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2019/nsf19580/nsf19580.htm

- Slides will be posted to NSF EPSCoR website following the webinars.

This webinar is <u>NOT</u> a substitute for reading the solicitation.

Critical Date/Eligibility Information

- **<u>Letter of Intent (LOI) required!!!!!</u>**

  Due July 2, 2019

  NSF internal planning only; not considered in merit review

  – **Use FastLane!**

- Full proposals due **July 30, 2019**

- Only <u>one</u> submission allowed per eligible jurisdiction

- Eligible if:

  – EPSCoR Jurisdiction;

  – No current RII Track-1, or current RII Track-1 expires by October 1, 2020;

  ** Add'l requirements apply if newly re-eligible in 2019 (affects IA only)

Changes since FY 2018

- Added content to address the potential re-entry of jurisdictions that had previously lost EPSCoR eligibility due to exceeding the funding threshold.

- Major revision to the Program Description section to clarify programmatic expectations for proposals to this program.

  - This is _**not**_ a major change to our intended vision; rather it is just an attempt to articulate our expectations more clearly.

- Changes to the <u>titles</u> of some proposal sections.

  - But not major changes to the sections themselves.

- Clarifications to the expectations for External Evaluation

- Minor changes to text across other sections to add clarity.

EPSCoR Strategic Goals

- Catalyze *research capability* across and among jurisdictions;

- Establish *STEM professional development* pathways;

- *Broaden participation* of diverse groups/institutions in STEM;

- Effect *engagement in STEM* at national and global levels; and

- Impact jurisdictional *economic development*.

> NSF EPSCoR's intent is for RII Track-1 proposals to include elements that respond to **all** of these strategic goals!!

RII Track-1 Program Description

- Program Description section has been heavily revised to more clearly reflect the intent of the RII Track-1 activity and to highlight NSF EPSCoR's overall expectation for the proposals and projects.

- "Consistent with NSF EPSCoR's programmatic goals, the purpose of RII Track-1 is to provide support for sustainable improvements in a jurisdiction's academic research infrastructure that lead to increased research capacity and competitiveness. Specifically, the program aims to improve jurisdictional capacity in areas of STEM research and education that are supported by the National Science Foundation and aligned with the jurisdiction's science and technology priorities."

RII Track-1 Program Description (cont.)

- Highlights the need for a compelling project vision that aligns with jurisdictional R&D priorities, and the roles of steering committees and S&T plans in developing that vision.

- Emphasizes the need for detailed plans to back up all parts of the proposed vision.

- Acknowledges the balance between research activities and research infrastructure development / capacity building. Notes the need for strategic choices to be well justified as they relate to this balance.

- Stresses the importance of jurisdiction-wide impacts across sectors.

Required Sections (Project Description)

* Note that NSF now requires that all proposals contain sections labeled "Intellectual Merit" and "Broader Impacts" in their Project Descriptions

- There is an overall 35-page limit to the Project Description. Proposals that use the full page limit for each individual section will exceed the overall limit.

- <u>Status and Overview</u> (3 pages max)
  - Status of jurisdiction's R&D enterprise, including strengths, barriers, and opportunities for development.

- <u>Results from Relevant Prior NSF Support</u> (2 pages max)
  - Should include prior RII Track-1 awards as well as other relevant investments

- <u>Research Program</u> (22 pages max)

- <u>Education and Workforce Development</u> (5 pages max)
  - If new faculty hires are proposed, their roles in the Research Program should be clearly described. Projects are expected to follow through on all proposed new faculty hires.

Required Sections (Project Description) (cont.)

- <u>Emerging Areas and Seed Funding</u> (2 pages max)
  - Flexibility to respond quickly and effectively to new opportunities and pursue high-risk, high-impacts research.
  - Target investment areas must be indicated with their relevance to overall project.
  - Annual seed funding may not exceed 10% of annual NSF budget request.

- <u>Broadening Participation</u> (2 pages max)
  - Must include specific baseline data for all planned activities intended to increase the participation of specific groups or populations.

- <u>Partnerships and Collaborations</u> (3 pages max)

- <u>Communication and Dissemination</u> (2 pages max)

- <u>Sustainability</u> (3 pages max)
  - <u>Sustainability of Project Activities</u>
    - Overall goals for sustaining key project outcomes (which ones, why, and how)
  - <u>Post RII Track-1 Extramural Funding</u>

Required Sections (Project Description) (cont.)

- Management, Evaluation, and Assessment (6 pages max)
  - Project Management Team
    - EPSCoR Steering Committee, Project Management Team, and any External Advisory Boards
  - Evaluation and Assessment
    - Proposal should include mechanisms to provide meaningful feedback to project team, and explain how feedback will inform further activities.
    - More detailed evaluation plan will be developed along with strategic plan and submitted by end of Year 1.
    - Evaluators must be compensated as consultants, not as subawardees.
  - Summary Tables of Requested NSF Support
    - Budget Tables A and B
    - BOTH are required, and fall under both section limit and overall 35-page limit

Budget Requirements

- $20M over 5 years
  - Not limited to $4M/year
  - Request must be consistent with proposed activities
  - Budget request should reflect project effort/needs over time (Scope, Schedule, Budget)
  - Timely spending is required to justify continuing grant increments

- Cost Sharing required
  - Show entire cost sharing amount (20% of total NSF Request) on Line M of Year 1
  - Budget justification: explain source, nature, amount, and availability
    - Cost sharing must be allowable and allocable to the project
    - Sources and uses must be consistent with policies of NSF and the awardee institution(s) as well as federal and state (or territorial) laws and regulations.

Budget Requirements (cont.)

- Emerging Areas and Seed Funding
  - Must relate to scope of RII Track-1 project as defined by proposal and Strategic Plan.

  - Seed funding request may not exceed 10% of NSF budget annually

  - Seed funding of projects/activities *via* cost share must relate to the scope of the RII Track-1 project as defined by proposal and Strategic Plan.

- External Evaluators & Meeting Facilitators
  - Must be included in budget as <u>Consultants</u> and not as subawardees

Collaborators & Other Affiliations Document

- NSF Proposal and Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG Chapter II.C.1.e) (NSF 19-1) requires PIs, co-PIs, and other senior project personnel to individually upload C&OA information as a Single Copy Document.

- NSF requires submission of a spreadsheet template to identify C&OA
  - directly linked in FastLane
  - also at: https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/coa.jsp

- For RII Track-1: submit for senior personnel in List of Participants (the PI, Co-PIs, and Funded Participants)

C&OA Warnings

- Must use template provided by NSF

- Lists must be complete and current

  – Do *NOT* rely on biographical sketches to collate information

- List only the primary PhD advisor(s), not committee members

- List only primary PhD advisee(s)

- Co-authors and collaborators include those on works pending and in preparation

- Do not list colleagues or acquaintances who are not collaborators, PhD advisors/advisees, co-editors

- The mere sharing of data, software, or IP does not create collaboration or affiliation

- May need to save as text file if problems printing

  – Save as: Text (Tab delimited) (*.txt)

  – (We're told this is being worked on but…)

Lists of Participants & Participating Organizations

Templates will be distributed by email upon receipt of Letters of Intent.

Participants (and others)

- PIs and co-PIs (appear on the cover page)
- Other funded participants (appear in budget lines A or B)
- External Evaluator(s) named in proposal
- Consultants (other than external evaluators)
- Advisory Board (if known) and Jurisdictional Steering Committee members
- Unfunded participants and collaborators (if named)

Organizations

- Primary awardee and Subawardees (budget under G.5)
- Subcontractors (budget under G.3 or G.6)
- Unfunded (collaborating organizations not receiving funding/payment):
- Providing support, facilities, internships, etc.

Jurisdiction Science & Technology Plan

- Required Supplementary Documentation

- Must be accepted/approved at jurisdiction level

  - By steering committee or other governing official/body

  - Acceptance/approval indicated by signature(s) and date, either attached to the S&T plan or *via* a letter included with the Supplement Documents

- Effective date on cover page

- Approver cannot be a participant

- Avoid *Return without Review* – ensure S&T Plan is current and approved

- Identify STEM research priorities of jurisdiction

  - Alignment with research activities of proposal considered during merit review

Tips for Other Documents

- Cover Sheet
  - Title must begin with "RII Track-1:"
  - Make the title informative! (and brief!)

- Biographical Sketches
  - Should be included for all faculty-level participants
  - Biosketches for evaluators and key external collaborators may be included, but only as Supplementary Documentation.
  - No biosketches for advisory board members
  - Note new PAPPG guidance on Synergistic Activities

- Letters of Collaboration
  - Only include letters that communicate specific commitments of resources.
  - Do not use letters to describe activities (including evaluation plans).
  - Do not include letters of support that lack specific commitments.

- Don't forget your Data Management and Postdoc Mentoring Plans!

Compliance Checking

- Read the solicitation

- Follow the sections & headings for the Project Description

- Ensure all necessary tables are included

- Ensure Supplemental Documents contain Letters of Collaboration which specify contribution/commitment to project

- Plan your submission for several days before deadline to allow fixes to be made, avoiding *Return Without Review*

- Budget

  – Proposals lacking budget justification for lead and for each subaward will be *returned without review*

  – Clear justifications needed, ensure that subawards add up correctly

  – List postdocs, graduate, and undergraduate students on Line B

  – Budget justification must give source, nature, and amount of cost share

- Human Subjects and Vertebrate Animals

  – Check box(es) on cover page and be ready to submit approvals/exemptions

Merit Review

- Intellectual Merit

  – Potential to advance knowledge and understanding

  – Potentially transformative concepts

- Broader Impacts

  – Potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

For Both:

  – Is the plan based on a *sound rationale*?

  – Is there a mechanism to assess *success*?

  – How *well qualified* is the individual, team, or institution to conduct the proposed activities?

  – *Prior accomplishments* of the PIs/participants

  – Are there *adequate resources*?

Solicitation-Specific Review Criteria

- ## Research Capacity

  - Potential to enhance research competitiveness and capacity

- ## Jurisdictional Impacts

  - Potential to benefit the jurisdiction

- ## Workforce Development

  - Potential to enhance the STEM workforce and broaden participation

- ## Integration of Project Elements

  - Potential for added value and benefits from alignment of effort

** All criteria are necessary – none alone is sufficient.

** All receive full consideration during review

Feedback from Panels & Program Officers

- Read/follow the PAPPG

  https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=papp

- Read/follow the solicitation
  - Project description elements
  - Keep merit review criteria in mind

- Write to the reviewers/panel
  - Provide information that experts in field need to judge the proposed research
  - Avoid jargon that complicates review by broad audience, but don't shy away from addressing specialized, domain specific issues
  - Describe research methods, tools, approaches
  - Emphasize unique, novel, or transformative techniques, methods

- Why EPSCoR RII?
  - Demonstrate integration of project elements and jurisdictional impacts

Feedback from Panels & Program Officers (cont.)

Suggestions:

- Research should be driven by questions or hypotheses that place project in the current context of the research area

- *Avoid couching axioms as hypotheses*

- Research activities, methods, and approaches should address the questions/hypotheses (connect the "why" with "how")

- Activities should lead to deliverables that support stated goals

- How will success be identified? What will be resulting benefits?

- Claims of integration of research projects should be substantiated, as should the need for and benefits of collaborations.

- How will dependencies of activities/results be addressed?
  - Collection of data needed for modeling; simulation results needed for lab work; development of models or techniques needed for integration

Feedback from Panels & Program Officers (cont.)

- Provide sufficient details for experts to evaluate merit of research
- Demonstrate current awareness of the field/problem
  - Up-to-date, relevant references/citations
  - Address known issues, problems; describe state-of-the-art
  - Place proposed efforts in context of the field
- Preliminary results are appreciated
- How is your team uniquely qualified or positioned to perform the proposed work?
- Clear, legible figures with logical connection to the prose
  - Crucial information should not be only in figures
- Proposed work, methods, ideas should not be in Facilities section
- New hires:
  - Should be included where expertise/capacity is needed
  - Should be clearly justified by proposed work
  - Jurisdiction-specific Programmatic Terms and Conditions will require hiring to proceed as proposed

External Evaluation

- External Evaluators attend and participate in the Strategic Planning meeting

- Evaluation Plan is developed by External Evaluator working with management team

- Evaluation Plan must be submitted to NSF no later than the Year-1 Annual Report due date

- Year 1 may be evaluated at any time after approval of Evaluation Plan; reporting may be combined with Year-2 Evaluation Report

- Note that evaluation plans and reports should be delivered to PD/management team several months before due date

RII Track-1 No-Cost Extensions & Supplements

- No more than 6 months overlap allowed between consecutive RII Track-1 projects.

- RII Track-1 projects in last year with pending RII Track-1 proposal can request 6 month No-Cost Extension.
  - Duration intended to avoid excessive overlap with any potential new award.

- Current RII Track-1 awards with No-Cost Extensions may be eligible for supplements.
  - Discuss with you managing Program Officer.

Summary

- *__READ__* EPSCoR's NSF 19-580 for detailed, accurate, specific, information:

  – https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2019/nsf19580/nsf19580.htm

- Letters of Intent due: July 2, 2019

- Full proposals due: July 30, 2019

- Contact EPSCoR program officers if you have questions:

  – Primary Contact: Tim VanReken, tvanreke@nsf.gov, (703) 292-7378