

# EPSCoR Research Fellows (RII Track-4) NSF 20-543 Informational Webinar

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## Webinar Purpose

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- The goal for today is to inform the community about the recently released EPSCoR RII Track-4 EPSCoR Research Fellows solicitation.
- NSF 20-543 was released February 14, 2020
  - [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf20543](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf20543)
- Slides and a transcript will be posted to the NSF EPSCoR website following this webinar.

**This webinar is NOT a substitute for reading the solicitation.**

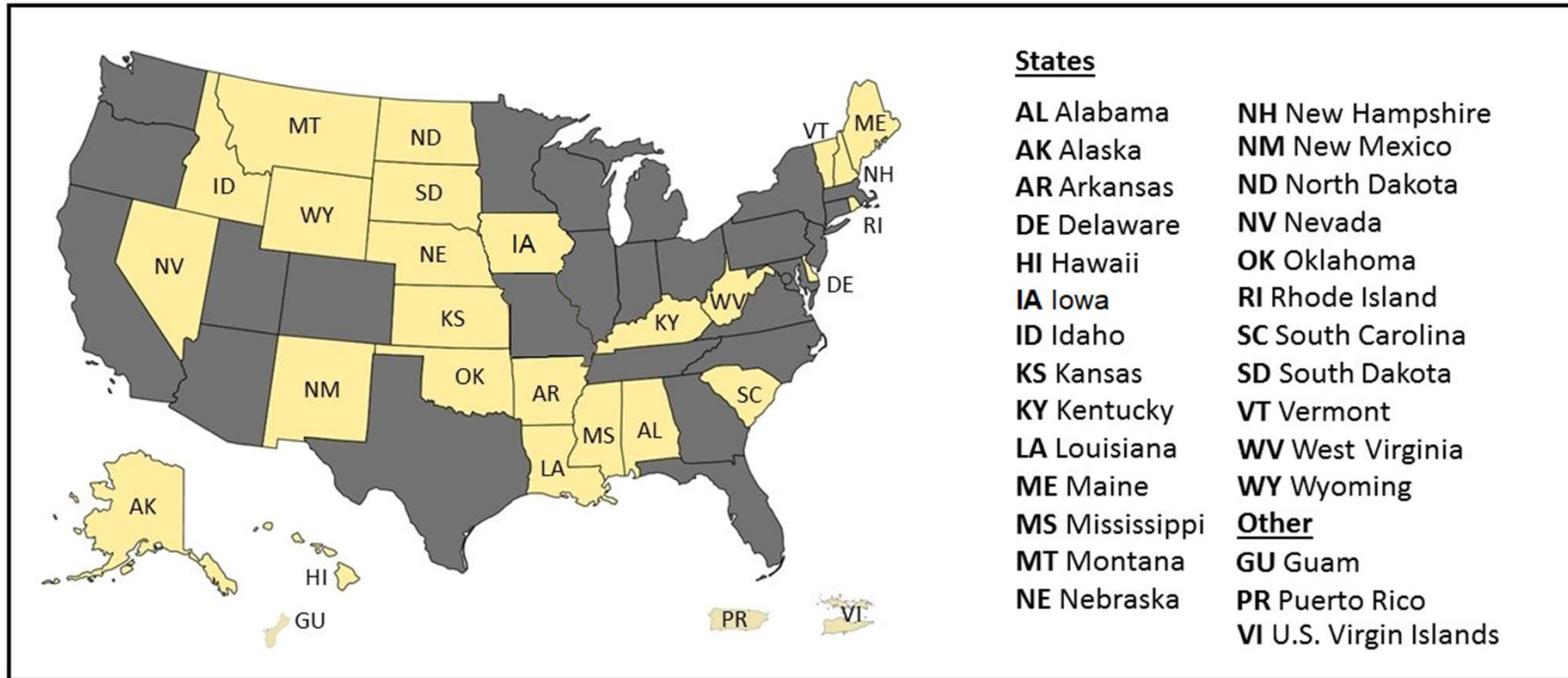
# Webinar Outline

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- The NSF EPSCoR Program
- The RII EPSCoR Track-4 Research Fellows Mechanism
- Proposal Content Overview and Requirements
- Merit Review Criteria
- What's New in the NSF 20-543 Solicitation?
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Closing Remarks
- Q&A

# NSF EPSCoR FY20 Eligibility



This includes twenty-five states, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

- FY20 States, Commonwealths, and Territories that receive  $\leq 0.75\%$  of NSF research support funding averaged over most recent 3 years
- Eligibility table updated annually and publicly available:

[https://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/programs/epscor/nsf\\_oiaa\\_epscor\\_eligible.jsp](https://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/programs/epscor/nsf_oiaa_epscor_eligible.jsp)

# EPSCoR Strategic Goals

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- 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.



**Discovery &  
Innovation**



**Education &  
Workforce**



**Economic  
Development**

**Building Capacity**



## Motivation for RII Track-4

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- Majority of RII resources go toward large, center-like projects:
  - RII Track-1: Jurisdiction-wide awards, typically \$20M over 5 yrs.
  - RII Track-2: Collaborations across jurisdictions, \$4-6M over 4 yrs.
- Additional investments in individuals or small teams through co-funding mechanism.
- In discussion with our community, recognized opportunity to catalyze the career trajectories for a new generation of research leaders.
  - Time to develop new or extend current research directions.
  - Pathway to strengthen research connections with partners nationwide.

# RII Track-4 Vision

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- Provides opportunities for non-tenured (or equivalent) investigators to further develop their individual research potential through extended collaborative visits to the nation's premier private, governmental, or academic research centers.
- Fellows will be able to learn new techniques, benefit from access to state-of-the-art equipment and facilities, strengthen collaborative partnerships, and shift or extend their research toward transformative directions.
- Experiences gained through fellowships are intended to provide benefits that will impact the recipient's career in years to come. These benefits to the Fellows are also expected to in turn enhance the research capacities of their institutions and jurisdictions.
- Any research topic that fits within NSF's overall portfolio will be considered for support.





# Track-4 Eligibility

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- PIs must have their primary appointment at an eligible institution:
  - Must be in an EPSCoR RII-eligible jurisdiction
  - Must be an Institution of Higher Education or a Not-for-Profit Non-Degree-Granting Organization
- At Institutions of Higher Education, PIs must hold a non-tenured faculty appointment:
  - Pre-tenure tenure-track position (typically Assistant Professors)
  - Long-term non-tenure-track position (most often Research Professors)
  - Eligibility is determined by tenure status on proposal deadline date – May 12, 2020.
  - Persons holding transitional (< 3 years) fixed-term postdoctoral appointments are not eligible for this program.
- At Not-for-Profit, Non-Degree-Granting Organizations:
  - Position must be an early-career career-track appointment
  - Independent research must be a major component of work duties
- Sole-PI proposals only; no co-PIs are allowed.
- **Hard limit of three proposal submissions per eligible institution**



# Fellowship Details

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- Fellowship provides support for the fellow to spend an extended period to conduct research at an identified host site.
  - Up to six months of salary support;
  - Travel between host site and home institution;
  - Living expenses at the host site (up to six months);
    - Multiple visits are okay, but total supported time may not exceed six months.
- Host sites may be any research institution within the United States or its territories/possessions.
  - University, Government, Corporate, Non-Profit facilities are all eligible;
  - Must identify a single host site;
  - Does not need to be in an EPSCoR jurisdiction;
  - Generally expected to be outside of PI's home jurisdiction and beyond easy commuting distance.



## Fellowship Details (cont.)

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- If needed, funds may also be requested to bring a trainee-level researcher along for the fellowship visit:
  - Typically a student or postdoc already working in the PI's group;
  - Salary support (up to six months; including benefits & tuition);
  - Travel between host site and home institution;
  - Living expenses at the host site (up to six months).
- Additional support will be allowed for the following direct costs associated with the work to be completed at the host site:
  - Up to \$10,000 (total) for lab fees, supplies, shipping equipment, publication costs, *etc.*
  - Up to \$5,000 (total) for other research-related travel
- NOT easily transferrable – If the PI takes a new position in a non-EPSCoR jurisdiction, the fellowship award will likely be terminated.



# What Goes in the Proposal?

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- Successful RII Track-4 proposals will present exciting, vibrant fellowship ideas that will positively impact and potentially transform the PI's individual career trajectory and more broadly impact his/her research field, institution, and jurisdiction.
- All proposals should include:
  - Motivation and research context for the work to be conducted;
  - Defined, reasoned, and organized research objectives which could be driven by specific research questions or hypotheses
  - PI's specific plans for the fellowship period; and
  - Discussion for how the benefits gained from the fellowship would be sustained beyond the award;
  - Clear specifications of fellowship goals, performance metrics, and a timetable;
- Explain how/why the RII Track-4 award will advance the work – what specific opportunities will be made possible *via* the PI's extended visit(s) to the host site?
  - The parameters for the partnership should be clearly established.
- Describe how the activities will lead to long-lasting impacts for both the PI's career and the home institution/jurisdiction.



# Solicitation-Specific Requirements

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- Cover Sheet
  - Project title must begin with “RII Track-4:”, followed by a concise, informative title in the topic area;
  - Proposal Type should be marked as “Research” (**not** “Fellowship”)
  - Primary Place of Performance should list the host institution for the fellowship visit.
- Project Summary
  - Must identify the proposed host site and primary research collaborator(s);
  - At the bottom, indicate the NSF Directorate, Division, and Program that most closely aligns with the proposal's research focus.
- Project Description
  - Strict 10-page limit.
  - Include separate sections on Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts



# Budget Details

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- Proposals may be for up to 24 months. Total funds requested may not exceed \$300,000.
  - Two-year duration is to provide flexibility in planning fellowship visit logistics; visits not expected to last that long.
  - Requested NSF support should be consistent with the project's proposed scope and activities.
  - **IMPORTANT:** This is not a two-year research project. The plan and budget should focus primarily on the fellowship period and on any directly related activity before and after.
- Budgets may include up to 6 months of salary and fringe benefit support for the PI and one additional trainee-level participant.
  - Total is per person, **not** per year
  - Support may be for academic, calendar, or summer months.
  - Tuition for trainee may be included if appropriate.
  - **NO** Salary for any Host Site Personnel!!



## Budget Details (cont.)

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- Travel expenses (including living expenses) for the PI and trainee-level researcher. Up to \$75,000 total:
  - Up to \$20,000 for transportation expenses between the PI's home institution and the host site.
    - Multiple trips between the home and host sites are allowed.
  - Up to \$50,000 for living expense (Lodging, Meals, and Incidental Expenses) at the host site.
    - May not exceed the *per diem* rates set by the United States General Services Administration (GSA) for the host site location.
    - Where feasible, PIs are expected to budget for lodging arrangements in a manner consistent with extended visits.
  - Up to \$5,000 in additional travel expenses may be budgeted for research-related travel. (E.g., for conferences).
- Up to \$10,000 in additional direct costs are allowed.

# Required Letters

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At least one letter is required in each of these three categories:

1. From the appropriate supervisory administrator at the PI's home institution.
  - Should confirm the institution's support of the PI's plans and particularly should verify that the PI will receive release time from other academic duties to complete the project as proposed.
  - Should also confirm the PI's employment status at the home institution as it pertains to eligibility for the RII Track-4 competition.
  
2. From the identified primary research collaborator(s) at the host site.
  - Should confirm the collaborator's understanding of the goals of the fellowship and provide evidence to demonstrate that the PI will receive the support necessary to complete the proposed activities.



## Required Letters (cont.)

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3. From the appropriate administrative managers at the host institution.
  - Should confirm that all necessary logistical arrangements (site access, office space, cyber connectivity) to ensure that the project can proceed as proposed.
  - In the rare cases where the PI believes the primary research collaborator at the host site is also the appropriate administrative manager, the PI should contact a program officer from NSF EPSCoR for guidance.

Additional Letters of Support from other parties may be submitted only if they are needed to verify specific tangible commitments related to activities described in the proposal. PIs will be required to remove letters that do not meet this standard.



# Merit Review Criteria

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All NSF proposals are evaluated through use of two National Science Board approved merit review criteria.

- Intellectual Merit—the potential to advance knowledge
- Broader Impacts—the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

—From NSF PAPPG 19-1 Ch.III.A.2

# Merit Review Criteria cont.

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For each of these criteria, the following elements are considered as part of the merit review process:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to:
  - a. Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
  - b. Benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?
2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
3. Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?
4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?
5. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

—From NSF PAPPG 19-1 Ch.III.A.2

# Merit Review Criteria cont.

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- Solicitation-Specific Criteria:
  - What evidence is presented to demonstrate that the proposed research outcomes can be achieved within the constraints of the fellowship period, with the work being performed primarily at the host site?
  - How will the fellowship have a positive impact on the trajectory of the PI's research career both during the period of the award and beyond?
  - How will the fellowship yield tangible benefits to the home institution and/or jurisdiction beyond the individual benefits to the PI?
  - What evidence is there that the home institution and the host site are each committing the necessary resources, both scientific and administrative, to lend confidence that the fellowship project will be successful in achieving its intended outcomes?

# What's new for the NSF 20-543 Solicitation?

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- Federal Laboratory Facility Access
- Reasonable Fellowship Distance
- Reasonable Fellowship Duration



# Frequently Asked Questions

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- Eligibility in Relation to the Solicitation Deadline
- Providing Research Context
- Travel to Other Sites
- Program Designation in the Project Summary

# Summary

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- **READ** EPSCoR's NSF 20-543 for detailed, accurate, specific, information:
  - [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf20543](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf20543)
  - Submissions will be subject to guidance from PAPPG 19-1
- Full proposals due: May 12, 2020
- Institutional limit of three proposals
  - Many institutions are running internal competitions for these slots – check with them for details!
- Contact EPSCoR program officers if you have questions:
  - Chinonye “Chi-Chi” Nnakwe Whitley, [cwhitley@nsf.gov](mailto:cwhitley@nsf.gov) , (703) 292-8458
  - Jose Colom, [jcolom@nsf.gov](mailto:jcolom@nsf.gov) , (703) 292-7088



**Thank you!**

