



**National Science Foundation  
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## **Dear Colleague Letter for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Research Related to the Gulf Oil Spill and Other Disasters**

The consequences of the Gulf oil spill seem likely to be broad and long-lasting. There are local, state, regional, national, and international aspects to the situation, and an unusual confluence of biological, geological, and human elements. This Gulf oil spill is the latest in a series of disasters that provide opportunities to examine the ways in which people and organizations anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and emerge from disasters. Such explorations can contribute to the development of theory and tools underlying future policies aimed at maintaining or improving well being and long-term sustainability in the face of disasters. Events like these offer special opportunities to examine broad issues like resilience, adaptation, and vulnerability while conducting scientifically sound research that provides fundamental new knowledge.

The Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) encourages scholars to consider how the Gulf oil spill and other disasters may provide an opportunity to pursue research that will produce fundamental, theory-enhancing contributions to the social, behavioral, and economic sciences. SBE is particularly interested in projects that would build on existing data sets (including data sets not traditionally used by social and behavioral scientists) or that would identify high priority enhanced or new data sets to improve capacity to study issues in adaptation, resilience and vulnerability. Interdisciplinary work may be particularly appropriate. While SBE has not specifically set aside funds for such research, the topic has strong connections with the wider NSF investment in Science, Engineering and Education for Sustainability as described in the FY 2011 Budget Request.

Scholars with research proposals for learning from the disasters should submit proposals to the most relevant standing programs of the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) Directorate for the fall 2010 or spring 2011 competitions. The SBE division web sites provide information about these programs: <http://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=SES> and <http://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=BCS>. For the fall competition, most of these programs have submission due dates in July or August. Successful research proposals will have scientifically sound research plans that are rooted in relevant theory and literature. SBE programs will evaluate these proposals in competition with other proposals submitted for these competitions.

If a research problem involves ephemeral data so that data collection absolutely cannot wait to begin until December, then the PI should consider submitting a RAPID proposal. SBE expects the research conducted under RAPID awards to be of the same high quality as for other awards, with scientifically sound research plans that are rooted in relevant theory and literature. The principal investigator must contact a program officer in the program to which the scientific contribution is strongest before submitting. Some programs will provide RAPID funding only for activities directly associated with the collection of ephemeral data. It is best to initiate contact with a brief (1-2 page) e-mail to the appropriate program officer, describing the proposed research question, the theory on which you are building, methods to be employed, and justification for a RAPID rather than a regular research proposal. Complete guidance on submitting a RAPID proposal is contained in Part I of the NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide: [http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf10\\_1/gpg\\_2.jsp#IID1](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf10_1/gpg_2.jsp#IID1).

Sincerely,  
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