



**National Science Foundation  
4201 Wilson Boulevard  
Arlington, Virginia 22230**

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## **Dear Colleague Letter - Interdisciplinary Research across the SBE Sciences**

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National Science Foundation  
Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences  
Subject: Interdisciplinary Research across the SBE Sciences

"Interdisciplinary research is a mode of research by teams or individuals that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice." National Academies' Report "Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research, 2004" and the [NSF Interdisciplinary Research web site](#).

[Rebuilding the Mosaic](#), which reports the results of the year-long [SBE 2020 visioning process](#), finds that scholars in the social, behavioral, and economic sciences believe that future research will be interdisciplinary, collaborative, and data intensive. The Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences (SBE) therefore encourages investigators to submit proposals that go beyond the boundaries of traditional disciplines, span across the existing core SBE programs, or extend outside the SBE sciences. The report identifies four cross-cutting themes that appear to be potentially fertile areas for this model of research: population change; disparities in experience and access to resources; language and cognition, including communication, linguistics, and the brain; and new technology/new media and social network analysis. This DCL does not limit eligible proposals to these cross-cutting umbrella topics. The directorate does anticipate future activities that will support research in some or all of these thematic areas, and proposals that address research problems from an interdisciplinary perspective within these broad topics are welcome.

Proposals may be submitted by individual investigators or teams but are expected to incorporate an integrated, interdisciplinary approach and generate results that will contribute to multiple disciplines. The lead PI is expected to be from a discipline appropriate for the host SBE program, but collaborators may be from any area of science. Such projects may require a large team and may also exceed the current average award size in SBE. In the case of large projects that bring together researchers from multiple disciplines, the SBE Office of Multidisciplinary Activities (SMA) may contribute funds to supplement those available from standing SBE programs.

Given the model of collaborative research that the *Mosaic* report describes, innovative partnerships and research collaborations that allow diverse individuals to work together in synergistic ways are especially encouraged. We also encourage projects that include beginning researchers as team members and, when appropriate, develop international partnerships. Finally, applicants are encouraged to consider the cross-cutting Research Coordination Networks solicitation ([11-531](#)), which supports networking activities, not research per se, so that groups of investigators can communicate and coordinate their research, training and educational activities across disciplinary, organizational, geographic and international boundaries. Proposals that come through the RCN solicitation are also eligible for supplemental funding through SMA.

This is not a special competition or new program. Relevant proposals should be submitted to an existing SBE program according to the program's regular target or deadline dates. The review process will follow

standard NSF practices agreed upon by the programs participating in a proposal's review. Investigators should contact the most appropriate SBE Program Officer to determine if their ideas respond to this activity's goals. Please note that the RCN solicitation specifies that RCN proposals for SBE programs should be submitted directly to the regular SBE programs in accordance with the due dates specified on their web sites. To determine the possible appropriateness of an RCN proposal for consideration by one or more programs, contact the Program Officers of the programs that might be appropriate.

Links to SBE's programs and target dates, including Program Officers' information, are available at <http://www.nsf.gov/dir/index.jsp?org=SBE>.

Sincerely,  
Myron P. Gutmann  
Assistant Director  
National Science Foundation  
Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences