



National Science Foundation
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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Improving Undergraduate STEM Education (IUSE)

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1. Will there be a program solicitation or RFP for Improving Undergraduate STEM Education?

There will **not** be an additional solicitation for IUSE. Any proposal should be about improving undergraduate STEM education and should produce new knowledge about what works effectively.

All pertinent details about the Improving Undergraduate STEM Education call for proposals can be found in the Program Description web site (http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=504976&org=NSF&sel_org=NSF&from=fund) and the NSF Grant Proposal Guide (GPG, NSF 13-1, http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_index.jsp).

2. What is a Program Description?

As per the GPG Chapter I.C:

The term "program description" includes broad, general descriptions of programs and activities in NSF Directorates/Offices and Divisions. Program descriptions are often posted on Directorate/Division websites to encourage the submission of proposals in specific program areas of interest to NSF. Program descriptions, like program announcements, utilize the generic eligibility and proposal preparation instructions specified in the Grant Proposal Guide (GPG), as well as the National Science Board (NSB) approved merit review criteria.

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_1.jsp#ID.

3. What do I need to know to respond to a Program Description?

Proposals submitted in response to the IUSE program description should follow the GPG's proposal preparation instructions, as described in Chapter II of that document:

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_2.jsp.

Specific Guidelines contents are described at the following address:

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_2.jsp#IIC.

Complete proposals help expedite review and processing. To assure that research and other proposals submitted to the Foundation are complete, an administrative check should be made before mailing." The GPG Checklist for Proposal Preparation can be found at:

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2000/nsf002/apx_b.htm

4. What happens if I submit after the target date?

According to the GPG Chapter I.F.1, target dates are "dates after which proposals will still be accepted, although they may miss a particular panel or committee meeting." Proposals received by the target date will be considered for FY 14 funding.

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_1.jsp#IF1

5. Are there any identified categories or tracks?

No, there are no categories or tracks in the Program Description.

6. Is an (internal or external) advisory board required?

An advisory board (either internal or external) is not required; however they may be useful and appropriate for many projects, particularly those that are large and more complex. If funds are requested for such a Board, it would be helpful to describe the nature and function of the board and the types of people you would appoint to such a board.

7. Does the Program Description have an expectation for dissemination of project outcomes?

The spread of the use of effective approaches to STEM education relies on outreach to the community, including presentation at professional society meetings, workshops, publication, and other mechanisms.

According to the Award and Administration Guide (AAG) Chapter VI.D.4.:

Investigators are expected to promptly prepare and submit for publication, with authorship that accurately reflects the contributions of those involved, all significant findings from work conducted under NSF grants.

Investigators are expected to share with other researchers, at no more than incremental cost and within a reasonable time, the primary data, samples, physical collections and other supporting materials created or gathered in the course of work under NSF grants. Grantees are expected to encourage and facilitate such sharing.

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/aag_6.jsp.

8. Does the Program Description have an expectation for evaluation of project outcomes?

According to the GPG Chapter III.A.1:

Meaningful assessment and evaluation of NSF funded projects should be based on appropriate metrics, keeping in mind the likely correlation between the effect of broader impacts and the resources provided to implement projects.

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_3.jsp#IIIA1.

9. What are the Common Guidelines for Educational Research and where can I find them?

The Guidelines were developed by a Joint Committee of representatives from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) in order to establish cross-agency guidelines for improving the quality, coherence, and pace of knowledge development in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education (NSF 13-126).

The Common Guidelines (NSF 13-126) can be found at http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf13126

A related FAQ (NSF 13-127) is at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2013/nsf13127/nsf13127.jsp>.

10. Can you give me a quick overview on the Common Guideline for Educational Research?

An FAQ (NSF 13-127) about the Common Guidelines can be accessed at: <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2013/nsf13127/nsf13127.jsp>.

11. May I submit letters of commitment or collaboration?

As per the GPG Chapter II.C.2.j:

Documentation of collaborative arrangements of significance to the proposal through **letters of commitment** can be submitted.

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_2.jsp#IIC2j

As per the GPG Chapter II.C.2.d.(iv):

Any substantial collaboration with individuals not included in the budget should be described and documented with a letter from each collaborator, which should be provided in the supplementary documentation section of the FastLane Proposal Preparation Module.

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_2.jsp#IIC2div

12. May I submit letters of support?

As per the GPG Chapter II.C.2.j.:

Letters of support should not be submitted as they are not a standard component of an NSF proposal.

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_index.jsp).

13. Are appendices allowed?

According to GPG Chapter II.A, appendices may NOT be included.

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_index.jsp.

14. Is the Project Description still limited to 15 pages?

As per the GPG Chapter II.D.ii:

The Project Description (including Results from Prior NSF Support, which is limited to five pages) may not exceed 15 pages. Visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limitation.

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_2.jsp#IIC2dii.

15. How many proposals may I submit with respect to the February 4 target date?

The Program Description does not include a limit on the number of proposals submitted:

http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=504976&org=DUE&from=home.

16. Will there be any information on any budget limits?

The Program Description does not include any budget limits:

http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=504976&org=DUE&from=home.

17. Does the Improving Undergraduate STEM Education program description allow proposals for five years of funding?

According to the GPG Chapter II.C.2.a.b:

Grants are normally awarded for up to three years but may be awarded for periods of up to five years. The Foundation encourages PIs to request awards for durations of three to five years when such durations are necessary for completion of the proposed work and are technically and managerially advantageous.

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_2.jsp#IIC2a.

18. What are "unsolicited" proposals? Are all proposals "unsolicited"?

All proposals submitted to IUSE are considered "unsolicited" because they are in response to a program description, not in response to a program solicitation.

19. I was preparing a proposal in response to another program's solicitation and then learned that that program would no longer be accepting proposals for this year (e.g., TUES, STEP, WIDER, etc.). Can I submit this proposal to the Improving Undergraduate STEM Education program?

You could submit a proposal prepared for one of those programs to the IUSE program. However, it should be noted that the IUSE program description provides fewer restrictions.

A stronger proposal is one for which the PI team has considered more directly the structure of the proposed project in meeting the goal of IUSE "to address immediate challenges and opportunities facing undergraduate STEM education, as well as those that anticipate new structures and function of the undergraduate STEM learning and teaching enterprise."

Please refer to the Program Description: http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=504976&org=DUE&from=home.

20. May I combine aspects of different programs (e.g. TUES, STEP, or WIDER) in a project?

Yes. See [Question 19](#).

21. Can I apply for laboratory equipment that is integral to the project?

As per the GPG Chapter II. C. 2. g.:

Allowable items ordinarily will be limited to research equipment and apparatus not already available for the conduct of the work. General-purpose equipment, such as a personal computer and office furnishings, are not eligible for support unless primarily or exclusively used in the actual conduct of the proposed research.

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_2.jsp#IIC2gI

22. Must a project evidence-based or evidence-generating?

As per the Program Description:

Proposals should describe projects that build on available evidence and theory, and that will generate evidence and build knowledge.

23. Do I need to present baseline data and a theory of change?

If the rationale for your project and the basis and execution of its activities can be illuminated by such data or any other data or information, then you may provide it, but it is not required.

24. Do I need to include a Data Management Plan with my proposal?

Yes.

As per the See the GPG, Chapter II.C.2.j:

Proposals must include a supplementary document of no more than two pages labeled "Data Management Plan". This supplement should describe how the proposal will conform to NSF policy on the dissemination and sharing of research results.

See the GPG, Chapter II.C.2.j:

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/gpg_2.jsp#dmp.

See also the AAG Chapter VI.D.4:

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/aag_6.jsp#VID4.

25. Do I need to include a Postdoctoral Fellow Mentoring Plan with my proposal?

Yes, if you are requesting support for postdoctoral fellows.

As per the GPG, Chapter II.C.2.j:

Each proposal that requests funding to support postdoctoral researchers must include, as a supplementary document, a description of the mentoring activities that will be provided for such individuals.

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf11001/gpg_2.jsp#dmp.

26. What about the funds on the STEP, TUES or WIDER grant I already have in place?

Funding through current awards in the STEP, TUES, and WIDER programs will continue to follow the conditions outlined in your award letter.

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