



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

**NSF 14-121**

**Dear Colleague Letter: NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) - Graduate Research Opportunities Worldwide (GROW)**

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September 29, 2014

The purpose of this Dear Colleague Letter is to announce the continuation of GRFP's Graduate Research Opportunities Worldwide (GROW). Through GROW, NSF Graduate Research Fellows are provided an opportunity to engage in international collaborations with investigators in partner countries around the world.

Through GROW, NSF Graduate Fellows can benefit from partnerships developed by NSF with funding organizations in other countries. The program is divided into two tracks: GROW and GROW with USAID. The standard GROW track offers research opportunities in the following partner countries: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, India, Ireland, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, and Switzerland. Opportunities with additional partners and countries are announced on the GROW website (<http://www.nsf.gov/grow>) as they become available.

Through a partnership between NSF and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the GROW with USAID track provides opportunities to NSF Graduate Fellows to conduct research in developing countries, which includes Brazil, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Senegal, and South Africa. GROW with USAID recipients have the opportunity to work with non-government organizations, private sector companies, research centers, universities, and government ministries to conduct research to help solve important development issues in these countries.

GROW offers funding for international stays 2-12 months, with the duration varying by country and partner organization. Details for each partner organization, including eligible institutions and organizations, levels of in-country support, and restrictions on the duration of stays, are available through links to their websites available at <http://www.nsf.gov/grow>.

**ELIGIBILITY AND FUNDING**

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GROW is open to active NSF Graduate Research Fellows (both "on tenure" and "on reserve")<sup>1</sup> who have completed at least one year of their graduate program at the time of application and will retain their active status until at least May 2016. They must be enrolled at U.S. institutions, making satisfactory progress towards their degrees, and have fulfilled all GRFP reporting requirements. The competition is open to MS- and PhD-seeking Fellows.

NSF Graduate Fellows are encouraged to consult the GRFP Administrative Guide and FAQs for questions related to their fellowship. These are accessed through the following links:

[http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf13084](http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf13084)

[http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf13085](http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf13085)

GROW international travel allowances are awarded to Fellows based on an annual competition. The anticipated maximum number of Fellows to be supported by GROW in fiscal year 2015 is 400. All GROW awards are subject to the availability of funds, merit review, and acceptance by both the National Science Foundation and NSF's partner organizations.

Only one (1) application per year per Fellow will be accepted. Former GROW recipients may reapply to conduct research in the same country as their original award or propose a new international collaborator as long as they meet the general eligibility requirements.

## **GRFP GROW INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL ALLOWANCE INFORMATION AND ALLOWABLE COSTS**

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GROW Fellows will receive an international travel allowance of \$5,000 through their home U.S. institution to cover travel and research costs associated with the international research collaboration. See the Budget and Budget Justification section below for restrictions on use of NSF funds. Additional support to cover expenses while abroad differs among partner organizations (including USAID). For further information, see the GROW website (<http://www.nsf.gov/grow>) and the partner organization's GROW website. The travel allowance provided by NSF may be used to fund multiple trips to the partner country, subject to the approval of the Fellow's GRFP research advisor, institution, and international host.

NSF Graduate Fellows "on tenure" selected for GROW will receive a GROW travel allowance in addition to their NSF GRF stipend through their home U.S. institution. The NSF GRF stipend remains subject to U.S. tax laws. Fellows "on reserve" for any or all of the research experience period will not receive the NSF GRF stipend during the period they are on "on reserve" but will be eligible to receive the GROW travel allowance and associated support from the partner organization.

GROW funding is a travel allowance to the Fellow for the subsequent fellowship year (e.g., awards announced April-May 2015 are for use in the 2014-2015 or 2015-2016 Fellowship Years and travel must conclude by August 31, 2016). Extensions are subject to the approval of the Fellow's GRFP institution, international host, and the partner organization. GROW funds may not be transferred to another NSF Graduate Fellow.

## **GROW REQUEST SCHEDULE AND CONSIDERATION**

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- **September 26, 2014.** GROW is announced to NSF Graduate Fellows and GRFP Institutions.
- **September 26, 2014-December 15, 2014.** NSF Graduate Fellows submit GROW travel requests through the GRFP FastLane module, adhering to the NSF submission guidelines specified in this Dear Colleague Letter. A signed Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) Certification form must be submitted as part of the application. The GRFP Coordinating Official of the Fellow's home institution must approve the Fellow's requests in the GRFP FastLane module by **5 p.m. local time on December 15, 2014**; the GRFP Coordinating Official must approve the submission before NSF receives the application. Applicants are encouraged to check with their GRFP Coordinating Official regarding institutional policies and deadlines for submitting GROW requests. GROW applications that are incomplete or do not comply with the submission guidelines will be returned without review.
- **December 16, 2014 - March 30, 2015.** GROW applications are reviewed internally by NSF using the National Science Board approved merit review criteria. Meritorious GROW applications are forwarded to the GROW contact person at each partner organization for review and approval by the counterpart funding organization.
- **April-May 2015.** Announcement of GROW recipients. NSF Graduate Fellows and their Coordinating Officials are notified via email and NSF's Fastlane system of the outcome of the

selection and review process. GROW travel allowances are provided to the Fellows' institutions as part of the summer funding increment in June-July 2015. The GRFP PI (Graduate Dean) and Financial Officer provide administrative and financial oversight of the GROW travel allowance(s) of NSF Graduate Fellows selected for GROW as part of the GRFP award to the institution.

- Successful applicants may commence their international research collaboration as early as **June 1, 2015**; research visits must be initiated in the 2014-2015 or 2015-2016 Fellowship Years, with the expended travel allowance (\$5,000) for each NSF Graduate Fellow reported once on the GRFP Program Expense Report covering the time period of travel. NSF Graduate Fellows must complete their GROW experience and associated travel before the end of their GRFP Fellowship.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING GROW APPLICATIONS

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1. Applications for GROW are submitted by NSF Graduate Fellows through the "GRFP Additional Funding Opportunities" link in the **GRFP FastLane module**. Applications should comply with the NSF standard proposal preparation instructions (e.g., font, spacing and margin requirements; see [http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf14001/gpg\\_2.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf14001/gpg_2.jsp)) and all materials should be uploaded as a single PDF file.

NSF Graduate Fellows interested in working as a collaborative team on the same project with the same international host(s) must submit separate applications that include descriptions of the specific nature of the collaboration and the applicants' individual contributions to the joint project. Separate letters of endorsement from the NSF Graduate Fellows' research advisor(s) are also required.

GROW applications must be certified by the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) through the use of a signed AOR Certification form (available at <http://www.nsf.gov/od/iia/ise/grow-aor-certifications-form.pdf>), which is submitted with the application as part of the PDF file. GROW applicants should contact their GRFP Coordinating Official to identify their institution's AOR for GROW proposals. The GRFP Coordinating Official approves the GROW travel request in the GRFP FastLane module and submits the application to the NSF.

2. GROW applications must include all the following elements (in the order they appear below) and must be submitted as a single PDF file:
  - a. **Coversheet** with the Name of NSF Graduate Fellow, Fellow ID, Project Title, Proposed International Research Collaborator(s), and Proposed Dates and Duration of Visit(s). The international collaborators and organizations must be identified. The Coversheet should also indicate whether the proposal is being submitted for consideration for GROW or GROW with USAID.
  - b. **Project Summary**. A summary (maximum of 1 page) consisting of an overview of the project and collaboration and separate statements of the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts of the proposed international research activities.
  - c. **Project Description**. (Limit: 5 pages; single spaced, references are not included in the page limit). A concise, substantive description of the proposed plan for research and general interaction between the NSF Graduate Fellow and the proposed international research partners, including justification for the duration of the proposed international research visit and the expected mutual scientific/engineering benefits and outcomes of the project.

The Project Description must describe how the NSF Graduate Fellow will:

- i. Benefit from specialized expertise, equipment, facilities, field sites, data, and/or other resources located outside the U.S.
- ii. Build international collaborations that will enhance and contribute to the Fellow's professional network.
- iii. Integrate the proposed international research activities into the Fellow's graduate degree and research program and future career goals.

Project Descriptions for applications submitted for the GROW with USAID track are required to contain responses to the following questions, in addition to those above:

- iv. Why did you choose to pursue a GROW with USAID opportunity?
  - v. How could the proposed research have a broader, global impact or benefit?
  - vi. Do you have written or oral competencies in languages besides English? What are the levels of proficiency?
- d. **References Cited:** (Limit: 2 pages) Each reference must include the names of all authors, the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication.
- e. **Budget and Budget Justification** (Limit: 2 pages). The budget should consist of a \$5,000 international travel allowance request for the Fellow's costs incurred as a result of the international cooperation. No specific format for the budget is required. However, a tabular format is recommended. Allowable expenses include, but are not limited to, travel to host country and institution, visa applications, field permits, research supplies, excess luggage, travel and health insurance, and other travel-related costs. Support for Fellow stipends, major pieces of equipment, and large amounts for materials and supplies are not allowed. Travel to specific conferences and workshops may be included, but relevance to the international research collaboration must be justified. Applications may not consist primarily of conference or workshop travel; international research engagement is required. The Budget Justification should include a reference to airfare (estimated) and other relocation and project costs (the remainder of the amount requested) for the project.
- Budgets for GROW with USAID track should also include a request and justification for additional travel funds and in-country support provided by USAID. For further information, see the GROW with USAID website (<http://www.nsf.gov/od/ia/ise/grow-country-details-usaid.jsp>).
- NSF Graduate Fellows are responsible for making their own travel arrangements, as well as for obtaining health insurance, passports, visas, and any other required travel documents. Under the terms of the Fly America Act, international air travel must adhere to requirements to use U.S. flag air carriers [see NSF Award and Administration Guide, Chapter VI, Subsection G, 1 (b-c); [http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf14001/aag\\_6.jsp#VIG1](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf14001/aag_6.jsp#VIG1) ]. Travel that fails to comply with the Fly America Act cannot be reimbursed with federal funds.
- f. **Biographical sketch of the NSF Graduate Fellow.** (Limit: 2 pages) No specific format is required but do not include personal information, such as home address, telephone, fax, date of birth, and drivers' license number.
- g. **Letter of Endorsement from the NSF Graduate Fellow's Research Advisor** (Limit: 2 pages): The letter should describe the anticipated research benefits of the international collaboration for the Fellow's graduate program and the anticipated impact on his/her career. The letter must also indicate that the Fellow is making satisfactory progress in his or her

graduate degree program.

- h. **Letter(s) of Collaboration from International Host/Sponsoring Scientist(s).** (Limit: 2 pages per letter). The letter(s) must support the proposed interaction and summarize the objectives to be achieved between the applicant's research plan and ongoing research efforts at the foreign site. The letter should demonstrate the interest and commitment to hosting the NSF Graduate Fellow and indicate how the collaboration with the Fellow will engage the expertise and specialized skills, facilities, and/or resources of the international host. GROW with USAID applicants should submit the Institution Letter of Invitation as the Letter of Collaboration from International Host.
- i. **Biographical Sketch of the International Host/Sponsoring Scientist(s).** (Limit: 2 pages per host) No specific format is required.
- j. **Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) Certification Form** signed by a representative of the Fellow's institution who is authorized to sign on behalf of the University. It should not be signed by the Fellow, the host scientist(s), or a representative of the international host institution. GROW applicants should contact their GRFP Coordinating Official to identify their institution's AOR for GROW proposals.

## **GROW APPLICATION REVIEW**

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GROW applications will be reviewed by NSF using the National Science Board approved Merit Review Criteria of Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts. In addition, the following criteria will be used in evaluating the applications:

- The potential for true intellectual collaboration with the international research partner, engaging the expertise and specialized skills, facilities, and/or resources of the international collaborator; and
- The potential opportunities for effective research and career development for the NSF Graduate Fellow applicant.

Approval by the NSF and the partner funding organization in the respective host country is required before GROW travel allowances are awarded. NSF will notify Fellows and the Coordinating Officials via email and NSF's GRFP FastLane Module regarding the status of their application.

## **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

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NSF Graduate Fellows who receive GROW travel allowances are expected to submit a report by May 1, 2016 through the GRFP FastLane Module that details the experience and accomplishments of the GROW research activities. The report should highlight publications, presentations, and other products or achievements that are outcomes of the GROW activities. GROW partner organizations may have their own reporting requirements as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Fellowship Tenure status is the period of time during which Fellows actively use the fellowship award. A Fellow on Reserve status postpones the NSF fellowship support while remaining a full-time student at the affiliated institution.