National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230

NSF 15-057

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about the Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program for Submission in Years 2015 and 2016

Includes information on the NSF component of the Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE)

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Proposals must be submitted via FastLane or Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m., submitter's local time, to the applicable deadline date below:

2015 July 21: BIO, CISE, EHR
July 22: ENG
July 23: GEO, MPS, SBE

2016 July 20: BIO, CISE, EHR
July 21: ENG
July 22: GEO, MPS, SBE

The following set of questions and answers refer to frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the CAREER Program Solicitation. They are not intended to be a modification of the Program Solicitation. If there are any inconsistencies between the CAREER Program Solicitation and these FAQs, the information in the Program Solicitation prevails.

Before preparing CAREER proposals please read the CAREER solicitation and refer to the general information about NSF proposal submission including the Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) submission guidelines at:
http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=gpg

FastLane FAQ's can be found at:
https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/NSFHelp/flashhelp/fastlane/FastLane_Help/fastlane_help.htm#fastlane_faqs_introduction.htm

NSF Guide to Programs (for descriptions of NSF's research-supporting programs):
http://www.nsf.gov/funding/browse_all_funding.jsp

This document is organized as follows:

A. ELIGIBILITY

1. Whom should I contact to discuss my ideas for a CAREER proposal to be sure NSF supports the topic area?
2. The CAREER Program Solicitation states that a proposer must have the title of assistant professor or equivalent. I am non-tenured but hold the title of associate professor. May I apply?
3. In terms of eligibility, what happens if my appointment changes from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor (either tenure-track or tenured) after I submit my CAREER proposal?
4. The CAREER Program Solicitation requires that I hold a doctoral degree by the proposal submission deadline. I have defended my thesis but will not have my diploma by the submission deadline. May I apply to the CAREER Program this year?
5. I held a tenured position at my former organization, but I am not in a tenured position now. Am I eligible to apply?
6. I received my Doctorate six years ago. Am I eligible to apply?
7. Am I eligible if I hold a dual appointment at a university?
8. I am in a shared appointment with my spouse. Both of us are in a tenure track line and I have the title Assistant Professor. Am I eligible?
9. I do not currently have a CAREER-eligible appointment, nor do I have a signed contract for an appointment. I have applied for a position and may have a contract in place after October 1. May I apply?

10. I am not a U.S. Permanent Resident or U.S. Citizen or U.S. National. Can I apply to the CAREER Program?
11. My department (or organization) does not offer tenure, so I am not in a tenure-track appointment. How can I determine if my appointment is a tenure-track equivalent appointment?
12. Am I eligible to apply if I work at a non-degree-granting organization such as a museum, observatory, or research lab?
13. Although my organization offers tenure, the research institute that employs me does not. Am I eligible?
14. Am I eligible if I work at a 2-year college or a community college?
15. I am an assistant professor at an undergraduate institution that does not give graduate degrees. Am I eligible to apply?
16. I am a new faculty member at an institution that qualifies as an undergraduate institution under the provisions of the Research in Undergraduate Institutions (RUI) Program Solicitation. Is it possible to apply for the CAREER Program under the RUI provisions?
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18. I am a new assistant professor (or equivalent) in a tenure track position. Since I can participate in three CAREER competitions, should I apply now or wait until next year?
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A. ELIGIBILITY

1. **Whom should I contact to discuss my ideas for a CAREER proposal to be sure NSF supports the topic area?**

   Your primary contact is a Program Officer in a division or program that is closest to your area of research. The NSF website provides information about the NSF programs. Consult the Program Areas section of the NSF Find Funding web page (http://www.nsf.gov/funding/) and select the appropriate NSF Division/Office to review the associated Divisions, Programs, and Program Descriptions. The NSF staff directory (http://www.nsf.gov/staff/) provides contact information for Program Officers, by name and by organization. In addition, a list of CAREER Contacts is provided at: http://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/career/contacts.jsp.

2. **The CAREER Program Solicitation states that a proposer must have the title of assistant professor or equivalent. I am non-tenured but hold the title of associate professor. May I apply?**

   No. An associate professor (with or without tenure) is not eligible to apply for a CAREER award. Only assistant professors without tenure are eligible. The CAREER Program is intended for faculty members who are at or near the beginning of their careers.

3. **In terms of eligibility, what happens if my appointment changes from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor (either tenure-track or tenured) after I submit my CAREER proposal?**

   As long as you remain in a tenure-track Assistant Professor (or equivalent) position until the October 1st following your proposal submission deadline you will be eligible for CAREER. However, if your appointment changes to Associate Professor (either tenure-track or tenured) on or before the October 1st following your proposal submission deadline you would not be eligible for CAREER. Note that CAREER appointment eligibility is determined by the date your appointment becomes effective at your university, not by the date on the letter notifying you of your promotion. Therefore, you should not submit a proposal if you anticipate that your title will change to Associate Professor on or before the October 1st following the proposal submission deadline.

4. **The CAREER Program Solicitation requires that I hold a doctoral degree by the proposal submission deadline. I have defended my thesis but will not have my diploma by the submission deadline. May I apply to the CAREER Program this year?**

   No. You are not eligible unless you receive the official, dated diploma, by the proposal deadline.

5. **I held a tenured position at my former organization, but I am not in a tenured position now. Am I eligible to apply?**

   Yes. Previous employment in a tenured position does not affect eligibility. However, you must be in a tenure-track or tenure-track equivalent position at your new institution.

6. **I received my Doctorate six years ago. Am I eligible to apply?**

   Yes. CAREER eligibility is not limited by time from degree or years in a tenure track appointment.

7. **Am I eligible if I hold a dual appointment at a university?**

   Yes. Generally, only one Department will grant tenure. In that case, the chair of that Department should write the Departmental Letter. If applicable, the letter may be co-signed by the other Chair.

8. **I am in a shared appointment with my spouse. Both of us are in a tenure track line and I have the title Assistant Professor. Am I eligible?**

   Yes, if you meet the other eligibility requirements.

9. **I do not currently have a CAREER-eligible appointment, nor do I have a signed contract for an appointment. I have applied for a position and may have a contract in place after October 1. May I apply?**

   No. You must be employed in a CAREER-eligible organization or have a contractual agreement with such an organization to begin a CAREER-eligible appointment by October 1st following the submission deadline.

10. **I am not a U.S. Permanent Resident or U.S. Citizen or U.S. National. Can I apply to the CAREER Program?**

    Yes. You may apply if you are employed at an eligible U.S. organization and meet the other CAREER eligibility requirements. You will not be eligible for a PECASE award.

11. **My department (or organization) does not offer tenure, so I am not in a tenure-track appointment. How can I determine if my appointment is a tenure-track equivalent appointment?**

    NSF provides some guidance on what is considered a CAREER-eligible tenure-track equivalent appointment, but it is up to the proposer and the proposer's institution to determine whether or not the appointment meets these requirements. For a position to be considered a tenure-track-equivalent position, it must meet all of the following requirements: (1) the employing department or organization does not offer tenure-track positions to any new hires; (2) the employee is engaged in research in an area of science or engineering supported by NSF; (3) the employee has a continuing appointment that is expected to last the five years of the grant; (4) the appointment has substantial educational responsibilities; and (5) the proposed project relates to the employee's career goals and job responsibilities as well as to the goals of the department or organization. Adjunct, Instructor, or Visiting positions are not considered CAREER-eligible tenure-track-equivalent positions. Through the official submission of your CAREER proposal you are indicating that your position meets the CAREER-eligibility requirements. In addition, your Department Chair will verify that your position is CAREER-eligible in the Departmental Letter.

12. **Am I eligible to apply if I work at a non-degree-granting organization such as a museum, observatory, or research lab?**

    Yes, but you must have a tenure-track or tenure-track-equivalent appointment, substantial educational responsibilities as part of your employment, and meet all other CAREER eligibility requirements. The non-degree granting organization (museum, observatory or research lab) must be non-profit and located in the United States.

13. **Although my organization offers tenure, the research institute that employs me does not. Am I eligible?**

    You may apply as long as your appointment meets the requirements for tenure-track equivalency, you have substantial educational responsibilities, and you meet all other CAREER eligibility criteria.

14. **Am I eligible if I work at a 2-year college or a community college?**

    Yes, as long as your appointment meets the other CAREER eligibility requirements. NSF encourages submission from Community Colleges that award degrees in fields supported by NSF.

15. **I am an assistant professor at an undergraduate institution that does not give graduate degrees. Am I eligible to apply?**

    Yes. NSF encourages submission from primarily undergraduate institutions.

16. **I am a new faculty member at an institution that qualifies as an undergraduate institution under the provisions of the Research in Undergraduate Institutions (RUI) Program Solicitation. Is it possible to apply for the CAREER Program under the RUI provisions?**

    No. You must choose between submitting a proposal to the RUI or to the CAREER program solicitation. You may not include the additional Certificate of RUI Eligibility or the RUI Impact Statement on a CAREER proposal.

17. **If I have received funds from the Federal Government to perform research, am I still eligible?**

    Yes. You may submit a CAREER proposal if you have NSF or other Federal awards. What you propose to do as part of your CAREER proposal should not overlap what you have been funded to do by NSF or any other agency. You may not submit a CAREER proposal if you already have received a CAREER award.

18. **I am a new assistant professor (or equivalent) in a tenure track position. Since I can participate in three CAREER competitions, should I apply now or wait until next year?**

    The most important consideration is whether you are ready to write a proposal with an innovative research idea, an education plan, and a plan for integrating education and research in the context of your academic institution/department. You might discuss your readiness and your career development to date with your Department Chair or an NSF Program Officer.

19. **I have a Doctorate in Mathematics Education. Am I eligible to apply?**

    Yes. NSF supports educational research both through the Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR) and in the other Directorates.

20. **I see that there is no longer a CAREER eligibility certification form that comes up when I prepare my CAREER coversheet. How is my eligibility certified?**

    By officially submitting your CAREER proposal through FastLane or Grants.gov, you and your institution are indicating that you have read the CAREER eligibility requirements in the Solicitation and that you meet those eligibility requirements. In addition, the Departmental Letter from your Chair must include a statement to the effect that you are eligible for CAREER.

B. PROPOSAL PREPARATION, BUDGET PREPARATION, AND SUBMISSION

B.1. PROPOSAL PREPARATION

21. **What is the best place to start when preparing a CAREER Proposal?**

    Read the Solicitation thoroughly before starting and refer to it as you write your proposal. Discuss your plan with your Department Chair, personal and academic mentors, and individuals that have been successful obtaining awards from NSF. We also encourage you to contact your Program Officer, or the appropriate Division contact for CAREER listed at http://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/career/contacts.jsp

22. **How are proposals reviewed for compliance?**

CAREER proposals will be checked for compliance with formatting instructions in the Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) and the specific requirements of the CAREER solicitation. Program Officers will not approve or accept proposal file updates after the deadline, unless there is a technical or print problem with the proposal.

The following are common reasons why proposals are found to be non-compliant with the CAREER Solicitation:

- A co-principal investigator is listed on the cover page
- Departmental Letter is missing

All submitted CAREER proposals should also follow the guidelines in the Grant Proposal Guide. **Exhibit II-1** in this document provides a comprehensive Proposal Preparation Checklist that you should use to make sure the proposal is compliant with the GPG.

23. **I have two possible projects. May I submit two CAREER proposals?**

    No. You may submit only one CAREER proposal per competition.

24. **May I submit a CAREER proposal and a regular research proposal on a similar topic to NSF at the same time?**

    The same work cannot be funded twice. If the proposer envisions review by multiple programs, more than one program may be designated on the Cover Sheet. The submission of duplicate or substantially similar proposals concurrently for review by more than one program without prior NSF approval may result in the return of the redundant proposals.

25. **May I submit a CAREER proposal and another proposal on a different topic to NSF in the same year?**

    Yes, but only if the research is substantially different. NSF will return without review a second proposal on a closely related research topic.

26. **Could I put two different projects into one proposal?**

    Successful proposals tend to stay focused on a particular theme, although the 5-year time window enables more work than a typical 1-, 2-, or 3-year proposal would. The general advice is to stay as tightly focused as you can, keeping your combined research and education plan doable in the context of a 5-year award. Early career PIs tend to err on the side of proposing more work than can be accomplished in a single proposal, so care should be taken not to over-commit. If you have two separate projects in mind, consider discussing both with your mentors and/or Program Officer.

27. **How much space in the proposal should be devoted to education versus research, and how much depth is required for the education component?**

    No number is specified. Use the 15 pages allowed for proposal Section C, Project Description, including any results from prior NSF support, to your best advantage. A major objective of the CAREER Program is to encourage the integration of research and education. The research and educational activities do not need to be addressed separately, if the relationship between the two is such that the presentation of the integrated project is better served by interspersing the two throughout the Project Description. Remember that reviewers that are subject experts in your field will be mostly familiar with your research component. Some programs may send your proposal for review to education experts in your field, and for that reason, you should make sure that your education component is solid and well argued.

28. **I am not an education expert. Must I cite the education literature to the same extent as I would for my area of research expertise?**

    You should read and cite some of the most relevant education publications. As an academic, you should develop some knowledge of the education and human-resource needs in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) disciplines and some of the well-documented means of addressing these needs through education, training, and outreach. If you have not already done this, you should do so before you develop your education plan. When you begin to write, demonstrate that you have this foundation by identifying needs and developing a solid plan

to address them. ***Note that the Solicitation includes a list of relevant publications to get you started***. If you plan to work with K-12 students or teachers, become familiar with the local curricula and state education standards and explain how your plan will fit with these.

29. **Do I need to involve an outside evaluator for the education component?**

    You do not need to utilize an outside evaluator. However, you should have an evaluation plan to provide evidence and feedback that could lead to project improvement. Most academic institutions have an education department where you might find collaborators, or an evaluation system in place that could be modified to suit your needs. In some disciplines, investigators have had success by charging an expert advisory board with the evaluation of research and the education components.

30. **How independently should I work on my education component? My institution has an outreach effort in place and I would like to contribute to it. Would it be better for me to develop something completely new?**

    Your plans should reflect your own disciplinary and educational interests and goals, as well as the interests and needs of your organization. Because there may be different expectations within different disciplinary fields and/or different organizations, a wide range of research and education activities may be appropriate. The intent of NSF is to be inclusive, to make it possible for any academic PI to leverage his or her research in an educational context, and to ensure the PI's education goals are in line with his or her organization's goals so that the PI's work is highly valued in promotion decisions. Therefore, you should work with your institution to find the appropriate balance in this context. You are encouraged to make connections with appropriate education experts, and be sure to provide the necessary statements of commitment if and when you do. Collaborate with or seek out and utilize educational/outreach resources at your home institution, in the local area, or resources that are generally available to the community (such as, but not limited to, other NSF-supported projects).

31. **What are the expectations for the level of activities in the education component?**

    While excellence in both research and education is expected, activity of an intensity that leads to an unreasonable workload is not. For instance, teaching additional courses or taking on additional duties is not expected. What is expected is a well-argued and specific proposal for activities over a 5-year period that will build a firm foundation for a lifetime of integrated contributions to research and education.

32. **What documentation should I submit to show any collaborative efforts?**

    Describe the collaborative efforts within the project description. In addition, submit letters from collaborators (limited to the single-sentence format provided in the program solicitation) that simply state intent to collaborate and/or commit resources as detailed in the project description. Letters of collaboration are vital when partnering with existing programs or when collaborating with others. The specific details of the proposed collaborations should be described in the proposal's Project Description. The collaborative letters cannot be used to circumvent the 15-page limit for the Project Description. **Letters of support or recommendation for the PI are not permitted**. It is up to the PI to explain what is requested and approach the collaborator in a timely fashion to get these letters before the deadline for submission. Scan the signed and dated letter(s) into the Supplementary Documents section, and place them after the departmental letter. Do not submit any other documentation for the collaborators such as biographical sketches, appendices, or other NSF forms. You will not be allowed to submit these letters after the submission deadline, so plan in advance.

33. **I am interested in incorporating an international dimension in my proposal. How would I find out what kinds of activities are eligible for support?**

    Plans for international cooperative research and education activities are encouraged. The opportunity to collaborate with outstanding foreign researchers and educators, and to gain access to unique sites, equipment or facilities, may provide substantial benefits to the research and education activities proposed. For information on the types of activities that are eligible for support, contact your disciplinary Program Officer and the appropriate country Program Officer in the Office of International Science and Engineering (OISE) (http://www.nsf.gov/od/oise/index.jsp). The OISE web page also lists guidelines (4 bullet points) for proposals to be considered for OISE co-funding. OISE will consider co-funding successful CAREER proposals submitted to NSF disciplinary programs that adhere to these guidelines.

34. **My project will make a contribution to cyberinfrastructure, and I wish to seek support from the Division of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure (ACI). How should I indicate this?**

ACI encourages proposals that are either of:

1. primary interest to ACI, or
2. primary interest to another division of NSF, and of secondary interest to ACI.

In both cases, to be of interest to ACI, proposals should promote research, education, and the integration of research and education in projects that:

1. Contribute to exploration, experimentation, development, and/or deployment of comprehensive, integrated, sustainable, and secure cyberinfrastructure at the campus, regional, national, and/or international scale,
2. Have an effective cyberinfrastructure impact with clearly defined benefits across multiple research disciplines, and
3. Build on existing or upcoming ACI investments, as well as major cyberinfrastructure investments from other NSF divisions.

CAREER proposals that seek ACI support (whether as primary or secondary) should clearly address these issues within the body of the proposal, and should designate ACI as the primary or secondary program during proposal submission.

Additionally, these proposals should:

- Identify areas of science and engineering where the research will have an impact;
- Describe how the proposed research will fill a recognized need and advance research capability within a significant area (or areas) of science and engineering; and
- Identify tangible metrics to measure the impact of the research.

Additional context for ACI's interests in this solicitation can be found in:

Cyberinfrastructure Framework for 21st Century Science and Engineering (CIF21): http://www.nsf.gov/cif21

35. **What should be addressed in the Departmental Letter?**

The Departmental Letter should acknowledge institutional commitment to the professional development and mentoring of the PI, and is part of the consideration of the overall merits of the proposal. It should follow the format prescribed in the CAREER Solicitation. A letter that fails to acknowledge institutional commitment to the professional development and mentoring of the PI may disadvantage an otherwise outstanding proposal. Departmental Letters should be less than two pages in length, and they should not be a letter of recommendation for the PI. The letter should have a statement of how the department/institution will facilitate your career development because it values the education work that you are proposing to accomplish in the 5-year duration of your award. The letter must also include a statement to the effect that the CAREER PI is eligible for CAREER.

36. **I have additional information posted on my website I would like the reviewers to see. May I refer readers to my web site within the Project Description?**

PIs are advised that the project description must be self-contained and are cautioned that a web site that provides information related to the proposal should not be used because 1) the information could circumvent page limitations, 2) the reviewers are under no obligation to view the sites, and 3) the sites could be altered or abolished between the time of submission and the time of review.

37. **I have a postdoctoral researcher budgeted on my proposal and I am required to submit a Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan. Where in the proposal is the mentoring plan submitted and what must be included in the plan?**

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. In no more than one page, the mentoring plan must describe the mentoring that will be provided to all postdoctoral researchers supported by the project, irrespective of whether they reside at the submitting organization or a subawardee organization. Examples of mentoring activities include, but are not limited to: career counseling; training in preparation of grant

proposals, publications and presentations; guidance on ways to improve teaching and mentoring skills; guidance on how to effectively collaborate with researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplinary areas; and training in responsible professional practices. The proposed mentoring activities will be evaluated as part of the merit review process under the Foundation's broader impacts merit review criterion. Proposers are advised that the mentoring plan may not be used to circumvent the 15-page project description limitation.

38. **What should be included in the Data Management Plan and where should I place this section?**

Information about the contents and submission of data management plans can be found in Chapter II.C.2.j of the Grant Proposal Guide. All proposals submitted to NSF must describe plans for data management and sharing of the products of research, or assert the absence of the need for such plans. Proposals must include the plan as a supplementary document of no more than two pages. If applicable, your Data Management Plan should in some way address the following questions: What kinds of data, software, samples, and other materials will your research produce? How will you manage them (e.g., standards for metadata, format, organization, etc.)? How, if at all, will you give others access to your data, while preserving confidentiality, security, intellectual property, and other rights/requirements? How will you archive data and preserve access? We recognize that many fields do not have shared standards for data management and that circumstances vary enormously. Your plan should be appropriate to your own situation and in the context of what is acceptable in your particular area of research and education. Proposers are advised that data management requirements and plans specific to a certain Directorate, Office, Division, Program, or other NSF unit may be available on the NSF website at http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp.

39. **I would like to be considered for a PECASE award. What is the process?**

Each participating Federal agency has its own nomination procedures. To be eligible for a PECASE award through NSF, you must first be successful in getting a CAREER award. In addition to meeting the CAREER eligibility requirements, PECASE nominees must be U.S. citizens, U.S. Nationals, or U.S. Permanent Residents. NSF will select its PECASE nominees from among the most meritorious PECASE-eligible CAREER awardees whose CAREER awards have been in effect for no more than two years. The number of nominees allocated to each Directorate is proportionate to the Directorate's level of participation in the CAREER Program. During the nomination process, NSF or the OSTP (White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy) will request proof of citizenship, permanent residency status and other information necessary for a security clearance from a potential list of nominees. PECASE awards at NSF are honorary and carry no additional funding.

40. **If I held an NSF postdoctoral fellowship, do I need to include a "Results from Prior Support" section?**

Yes, you must include a "Results from Prior Support" section whenever you have served as a PI or co-PI on any NSF grant within the last 5 years. This includes postdoctoral fellowships, grants in equipment programs such as Major Research Instrumentation, and educational grants. If you have received more than one prior award (excluding amendments), you must report on the award that is most closely related to the CAREER proposal. (See the GPG for the required information.)

41. **I would like to submit some additional tabular material that would exceed the 15-page limit on the length of the project description. Can I submit this information as an appendix?**

No. The Project Description cannot exceed 15 pages (including Results from Prior NSF Support, which is limited to five pages). All visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limitation. Appendices are not permitted for CAREER proposals.

B.2. BUDGET PREPARATION

42. **What is an appropriate level of funding to request?**

The CAREER budget request should reflect the scope of the research and education plans, and the practices within your discipline. The minimum CAREER award size is $400,000, including indirect cost or overhead, for a 5- year period, except in the Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO), the Directorate for Engineering (ENG), and the Division of Polar Programs (PLR). Proposals to BIO, ENG, or PLR must request a minimum of $500,000 (approximately $100,000 per year) for the 5-year duration. There is no maximum award size, but be realistic about your budget expectations and what has been funded before by the Program considering your proposal. The average

CAREER award size varies across NSF. Some Directorates/Divisions/Programs usually fund CAREER awards closer to the minimum, while some others have a higher average award size. Before preparing the budget for your CAREER proposal, you are strongly encouraged to contact your disciplinary Program Officer or your Division CAREER contact to discuss your planned request.

43. **May I request academic year salary on a CAREER proposal?**

A PI who has heavy teaching responsibilities or whose proposed activities may involve a limited period of fieldwork or other extraordinary career-development activity in research or education may be justified in requesting academic year salary support on their budgets. Before including any academic year salary support on your CAREER budget you should contact your disciplinary Program Officer to discuss your individual case.

44. **May I request funds to support the education component of my CAREER proposal?**

Yes. You should support the education component with adequate resources to carry out your proposed educational activities. If resources are required, either the proposal budget or the project description should indicate how this aspect of the program would be funded. If working with K-12 education, consult teachers or those working with local teachers regarding teacher stipends and substitute pay. You may also budget for materials, participant stipends and travel, and the like. Be realistic.

45. **I will have a collaborator on my proposal. May I include the collaborator as a Co-PI or other senior personnel on my budget?**

No. You may provide funds for others to work on your research or educational activities, but they may not be listed as Co-PI or in the senior personnel section of the proposal--either in the primary budget or within a sub award to a collaborating institution. However, you may pay someone as a consultant in your project, or pay for his or her travel and field/lab expenses, materials and supplies, or access fee to a laboratory.

B.3 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

46. **What if my proposal is submitted after my submission deadline?**

The proposal will be returned without review. A CAREER proposal must be submitted in FastLane or Grants.gov by your organization before 5:00 p.m. your local time on or before the deadline of the Directorate or Office that you have selected. If you pick more than one program in Directorate or Offices with different due dates, the deadline for the primary organization (Directorate/Office) will apply. NSF Program Officers are not authorized to grant extensions of the CAREER deadlines.

47. **My proposal seems to fit in two different programs. What should I do to indicate which Program(s) I want to consider my proposal?**

You may designate more than one disciplinary program in the cover sheet if you think two or more programs should jointly review your proposal. It is very important that you select the most relevant program as the primary organization since that is the organization that is most likely to have primary responsibility for reviewing your proposal. Do not submit duplicate CAREER proposals to multiple disciplinary programs. Your proposal must be submitted by the CAREER deadline of the primary Directorates/Office that you selected in the cover sheet. You are strongly encouraged to contact the Program Officer most closely related to the subject matter when preparing a cross-disciplinary proposal.

48. **I am having problems submitting my proposal and the CAREER deadline is almost here. Who should I contact?**

Issues and questions related to the NSF FastLane system should be directed to the FastLane User Support desk at (800) 673-6188. You can also send an e-mail message to fastlane@nsf.gov. For information on the availability of the NSF FastLane system, phone (800) 437-7408 for a recorded message. For Grants.gov user support, contact the Grants.gov contact center by phone at (800) 518-4726 or by email at support@grants.gov. If FastLane or Grants.gov is unable to resolve the submission problem and you cannot submit your proposal by the deadline, please make sure to get documentation that you tried to contact these support centers before your deadline. For NSF to consider a deadline extension you must provide supporting documentation from FastLane or Grants.gov that there was a

problem at the time of submission that could not be resolved in time. A possible slowdown of these systems due to volume is not a valid reason for an extension. PIs are strongly encouraged to submit their CAREER proposals well in advance of the deadline to allow time to correct any problems that may occur in the submission process.

49. **I just noticed a major problem with my CAREER proposal. My CAREER deadline has not passed so can I fix the problem?**

    Yes, if you see a problem;**before the deadline**, you may use the FastLane Proposal File Update Module to replace files or revise other Proposal Attributes of a submitted proposal. An automatic request for a proposal file update will be accepted only if submitted prior to your CAREER deadline. On rare occasions, a proposal has technical problems due to PDF Conversion or printing problems. If your deadline has passed and you discover this problem, contact your disciplinary Program Officer to discuss whether NSF will approve a proposal file update. You should thoroughly review your proposal before it is submitted, including identifying any PDF conversion or printing problems. You are encouraged to download the final submitted version of your proposal from the FastLane site to ascertain that that version contains all the proposal parts and that it is compliant.

50. **Do I submit a proposal to just CAREER or to a particular program at NSF and how do I decide to which program I should submit my CAREER proposal?**

    CAREER proposals must be submitted to at least one primary program or unit through FastLane or Grants.gov. First, you should determine whether the proposed research project falls within the realm of research that NSF normally supports. If it does, then you will need to identify one or more disciplinary programs related to your research goals. One way to get a good overview of NSF is to look at the titles of the Directorates, Divisions and Programs. The NSF Guide to Programs and Directorate and Division web pages provide descriptions of the topic areas supported by NSF disciplinary programs.

    You may also search on keywords in the NSF Award Search tool (http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/) to find funded research projects in areas related to your project. The results indicate the NSF program(s) supporting those projects.

    If NSF determines that your proposal is more appropriate for a different program than the primary one you selected, the proposal will be reassigned to the appropriate organizational unit. NSF will make the final determination of where your proposal will be assigned and considered. You can track your proposal's assignment and progress through FastLane.

C. CAREER PROPOSAL REVIEW

51. **My work is multidisciplinary and I want to request that two different programs review my CAREER proposal. To which program should I submit my proposal and how will my proposal be reviewed?**

    NSF encourages multidisciplinary proposals and every attempt is made to ensure the best fit for these proposals. Proposals with a multidisciplinary focus are commonly reviewed by more than one NSF program, or by special multidisciplinary panels and/or ad-hoc reviewers. However, only one program can serve as the managing or primary program. Do not submit duplicate proposals. The primary organization you select on the cover page in FastLane or Grants.gov should be the program that supports the main thrust of your proposed research. NSF may choose to have your proposal reviewed by two panels. Alternatively, the managing Program Officer might ask for names of suggested reviewers from the second program.

52. **In addition to the two NSF merit review criteria (intellectual merit and broader impacts), what other factors will be considered in the review process?**

    Reviewers are asked to address the two NSF merit review criteria, but they are also asked to note the effectiveness of the integration of research and educational activities. Specifically they are asked to evaluate:

    - The proposed research project, including preliminary supporting data where appropriate, specific objectives, methods and procedures to be used and expected significance of the results;
    - The proposed educational activities, including plans to evaluate their impact;
    - How the research and educational activities are integrated with one another; and
    - Results from prior NSF support, if applicable

    Additional merit review considerations:

Reviewers will also be asked to evaluate the information provided in the required "Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources" section of the proposal, which is used to assess the adequacy of the organizational resources available to perform the effort proposed. In addition, the cognizant NSF Program Officer will review it for programmatic and technical sufficiency.

The Departmental Letter provides the information relevant to how the applicant's research and education activities mesh with the needs of the department/institution/organization.

The proposed mentoring activities, as described in the Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan submitted in the Supplementary Documents Section of the proposal (if applicable), will also be evaluated as part of the merit review process under the Foundation's broader impacts merit review criterion.

The Data Management Plan will be reviewed as an integral part of the proposal, coming under intellectual merit, broader impacts or both, as appropriate for the scientific community of relevance.

D. ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAREER AWARDS

53. **When will I be notified of the final decision on my CAREER proposal?**

Most proposers will be notified within six months of submission. You can check the status of your CAREER proposal by accessing the FastLane website. If you have not received notification of a decision on your proposal within six months of its submission and your proposal status is shown as "pending" in FastLane, you can contact the program or division to which your proposal was assigned to inquire about the status of your proposal.

E. POST-AWARD ADMINISTRATION

54. **Are the reporting requirements for CAREER awards the same as for other NSF awards?**

In addition to meeting all of the requirements for annual and final reports that apply to other NSF awards, the reports for CAREER awards must summarize progress in both research and educational activities and indicate how well these activities are being integrated and assessed. Collaborative and international activities should also be described. If you received your CAREER award under Program Solicitation NSF 08-557 or older solicitations, you are also required to submit a Departmental Letter with each Annual Report.

55. **Should I include a Departmental Letter with every Annual Report?**

This was a reporting requirement under previous CAREER solicitations. If you receive an award under the current program solicitation, you will not be required to submit an annual Departmental Letter. You are encouraged to continue to report on ways in which your CAREER award has impacted your department and/or organization.

56. **What types of supplemental funds are available for CAREER awards?**

CAREER awards are eligible for supplemental funding as described in the Awards and Administration Guide (http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=papp). Contact your disciplinary Program Officer to ask about possible supplemental funding opportunities for CAREER awards.

Supplements for international cooperative research and education activities are encouraged. Contact your disciplinary Program Officer and the appropriate country Program Officer in the Office of International Science and Engineering (OISE) (http://www.nsf.gov/od/oise/index.jsp) to discuss possible opportunities. Of particular note, NSF has agreements with both the European Research Council (ERC) and the German DFG to facilitate long-term visits for CAREER grantees to Europe to collaborate with ERC and DFG funded researchers. Dear Colleague Letters announce these opportunities annually. See the CAREER program web page for links to these Dear Colleague Letters.

CAREER Principal Investigators are invited to submit supplemental funding requests to support additional personnel (e.g., research technicians or equivalent) to sustain research when the PI is on family leave. See the NSF Career-Life Balance Initiative page (http://www.nsf.gov/career-life-balance/) for information on Career-Life Balance (CLB)-Faculty Early Career Development Program (CAREER) Supplemental Funding Requests.

57. **What happens to my CAREER award if I leave my academic appointment?**

If the principal investigator transfers at any time prior to or during the award period to a position that is tenured, tenure-track, or tenure-track equivalent at a CAREER-eligible institution, the CAREER award may be transferred to the new institution. Before such a transfer will be approved by NSF, the PI's new organization must supply documentation, including a new Departmental Letter. The new Departmental Letter must document support for the project goals as described in the original proposal or in a revised scope, as well as provide a plan for the mentoring of the PI. If a CAREER award has EPSCoR co-funding, no portion of the EPSCoR funds may be transferred to a non-EPSCoR institution.

The CAREER award must be relinquished if the PI transfers at any time prior to or during the award period:

- to a position that is not either tenured, tenure-track, or tenure-track equivalent; or
- to a new organization that is not CAREER-eligible.

This includes transfer to a university or college outside the U.S. or to a non-academic, non-CAREER-eligible institution. In these circumstances, transfer of the CAREER award to a substitute PI is not permissible. However, funding may be expended to allow the students or postdoctoral researchers to continue to be supported on the award for the remaining funded year. The award would then terminate at the end of that funded year. Contact the disciplinary Program Officer as soon you know you will be leaving to inquire about this possibility.

In other situations where a PI is unable to continue work, long-term continued support of the graduate and postdoctoral students supported under the CAREER project may be possible. If the PI's institution provides evidence that other faculty members are willing and able to provide high-caliber mentoring of the students, then the cognizant Program Officer can request that the NSF Division of Grants and Agreements approve the appointment of a substitute PI at the institution for the award with budget modified by elimination of PI salary. Support for students and postdoctoral associates (including travel to conferences and other items in the budget) would remain unchanged. Such action is most strongly supported when the students can pursue research in projects that are the same as those established by the original PI or in closely-allied areas.