NSF Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (S-STEM)

PROGRAM SOLICITATION
NSF 16-540

REPLACES DOCUMENT(S):
NSF 15-581

National Science Foundation
Directorate for Education & Human Resources
Division of Undergraduate Education

Full Proposal Deadline(s) (due by 5 p.m. submitter's local time):

May 16, 2016
April 20, 2017
Third Thursday in April, Annually Thereafter

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND REVISION NOTES

An annual submission deadline date has been added for subsequent years.

Important Information

The National Science Foundation does not award scholarships directly to students. Students who are interested in scholarships should contact the Office of Financial Aid at their institution to inquire about this and other scholarship opportunities.

Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) that have not received an S-STEM award or a STEM Talent Expansion Program (STEP) award are eligible to submit to Strand 1 – Institutional Capacity Building.

For Strand 2 – Design and Development Type 2 Multi-Institutional Consortia, while there is a limit on the number of proposals submitted by an institution (see Additional Eligibility Information), a proposal whose Principal Investigator is an educational or social science researcher does not count against the limit on the number of proposals submitted by an institution.

All proposals should state and justify the annual and total number of unique students who will be awarded scholarships over the duration of the award period, the number of scholarships awarded annually, the total number of scholarships awarded for the award period, the duration of the scholarship, and the annual and maximum amount of the scholarship for a scholarship recipient.

All students who are academically talented and low-income with demonstrated financial need are eligible for scholarships. The program encourages projects to recruit a diverse applicant pool that is inclusive of members of underrepresented groups (e.g., females, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, including Alaska Natives and Native Pacific Islanders, persons with disabilities, first generation college students, Veterans). An exception would be if the institution limits admission to a specific demographic group (e.g., women-only institution. However, in such a case considerations of women who are also Veterans is encouraged).

All proposals should state how the institution(s) is/are defining “low-income” and “academically talented”.

For reporting results and stating expected outcomes, retention in STEM is defined as the number and percentage of students starting the next academic year in STEM and in the following academic years to graduation. For example the one-year retention rate would be the number and percentage of students returning to school and starting their second academic year in STEM at the institution in which they started.

Any proposal submitted in response to this solicitation should be submitted in accordance with the revised NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG) (NSF 16-1), which is effective for proposals submitted, or due, on or after January 25, 2016.

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

General Information

Program Title:
NSF Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Program (S-STEM)

Synopsis of Program:
A well-educated science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce is a significant contributor to maintaining the competitiveness of the U.S. in the global economy. The National Science Foundation (NSF) Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (S-STEM) program addresses the need for a high quality STEM workforce in STEM disciplines supported by the program and for the increased success of low-income academically talented students with demonstrated financial need who are pursuing associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) [6], [16].

Recognizing that financial aid alone cannot increase retention and graduation in STEM, the program provides awards to Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to fund scholarships and to advance the adaptation, implementation, and study of effective evidence-based curricular and co-curricular activities that support recruitment, retention, transfer (if appropriate), student success, academic/career pathways, and graduation in STEM. The S-STEM program encourages collaborations among different types of partners: Partnerships among different types of institutions; collaborations of STEM faculty and institutional, educational, and social science researchers; and partnerships among institutions of higher education and local business and industry, if appropriate.

The program seeks: 1) to increase the number of low-income academically talented students with demonstrated financial need obtaining degrees in STEM and entering the workforce or graduate programs in STEM; 2) to improve the education of future scientists, engineers, and technicians, with a focus on academically talented low-income students; and 3) to generate knowledge to advance understanding of how factors or evidence-based curricular and co-curricular activities affect the success, retention, transfer, academic/career pathways, and graduation in STEM of low-income students.

The STEM disciplines supported by the S-STEM program include:

- Biological sciences (except medicine and other clinical fields);
- Physical sciences (including physics, chemistry, astronomy, and materials science);
- Mathematical sciences;
- Computer and information sciences;
- Geosciences;
- Engineering; and
- Technology areas associated with the preceding disciplines (for example, biotechnology, chemical technology, engineering technology, information technology, etc.)

The S-STEM program particularly encourages proposals from 2-year institutions, Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), tribal colleges, and urban public and rural institutions.

Cognizant Program Officer(s):

Please note that the following information is current at the time of publishing. See program website for any updates to the points of contact.

- Ron Buckmire, telephone: (703) 292-4630, email: rbuckmir@nsf.gov
- Connie K. Della-Piana, telephone: (703) 292-5309, email: cdellapi@nsf.gov
- Kevin Lee, telephone: (703) 292-4639, email: kelee@nsf.gov
- Ece Yaprak, telephone: (703) 292-4618, email: eyaprak@nsf.gov

Applicable Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):

- 47.076 --- Education and Human Resources

Award Information

Anticipated Type of Award: Standard Grant or Continuing Grant

Estimated Number of Awards: 60 to 80

Anticipated Funding Amount: $70,000,000 to $95,000,000

$70,000,000 to $95,000,000 annually, for new and continuing awards, subject to availability of funds. The program supports three types of projects. Awards for Strand 1 - Institutional Capacity Building projects may not exceed $650,000. Awards for Strand 2 - Design and Development Type 1 Single Institution projects may not exceed $1.0 million. Awards for Strand 2 - Design and Development Type 2 Multi-Institutional Consortia projects may not exceed $5.0 million. In all cases, the totals are inclusive of direct and indirect costs.

For Collaborative Proposals (see GPG Chapter II.D.5), the combined budgets of the collaborating organizations should conform to the budgetary limits specified in this solicitation.

Eligibility Information

Who May Submit Proposals:

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education (as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965) in the United States and its territories that grant associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degrees in the S-STEM disciplines listed in Section IV.B. are invited to submit proposals.

Who May Serve as PI:

For Strand 1 - Institutional Capacity Building and Strand 2 - Design and Development Type 1 Single Institution
projects, the Principal Investigator must be a faculty member currently teaching in one of the S-STEM disciplines listed in Section IV.B, who can provide the leadership required to ensure the success of the project. Projects involving more than one department within an institution are eligible, but a single Principal Investigator must accept overall management responsibility. Other members of the S-STEM project leadership and management team may be listed as Co-Principal Investigators.

For Strand 2 - Design and Development Type 2 Multi-institutional Consortia projects, the Principal Investigator must be a faculty member currently teaching in one of the S-STEM disciplines listed in Section IV.B or an institutional, educational, or social science researcher who can provide the leadership required to ensure the success of the project. A consortium project must have a Principal Investigator who accepts overall management responsibility. Other members of the S-STEM senior project leadership and management team may be listed as Co-Principal Investigators or PIs on collaborative research proposals.

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:
An Institution may submit one proposal (either as a single institution or as subawardee or a member of a Collaborative Research project) from each constituent school or college that awards degrees in an eligible field. See Additional Eligibility Information below for more details.

Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or Co-PI:
There are no restrictions or limits.

Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions

A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

- Letters of Intent: Not required
- Preliminary Proposal Submission: Not required
- Full Proposals:

B. Budgetary Information

- Cost Sharing Requirements:
  Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.
- Indirect Cost (F&A) Limitations:
  Not Applicable
- Other Budgetary Limitations:
  Other budgetary limitations apply. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.

C. Due Dates

- Full Proposal Deadline(s) (due by 5 p.m. submitter's local time):
  May 16, 2016
  April 20, 2017
  Third Thursday in April, Annually Thereafter

Proposal Review Information Criteria

Merit Review Criteria:
National Science Board approved criteria apply.

Award Administration Information

Award Conditions:
Standard NSF award conditions apply.

Reporting Requirements:
Additional reporting requirements apply. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.
I. INTRODUCTION

To meet the national need for a globally competitive STEM workforce, the National Science Foundation (NSF) established the Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (S-STEM) program in accordance with the American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-227 and as reauthorized by P.L. 105-313 in 2000 and P.L. 108-447 in 2004). The program seeks to increase the success of low-income academically talented students with demonstrated financial need who are pursuing associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) [3], [4], [7], [10].

The program addresses the challenges facing low-income students by providing a wide range of IHEs with funds to support scholarships to academically talented low-income students from a diverse student population seeking degrees in STEM. Funds also are to enable IHEs to establish a coherent ecosystem of effective evidence-based practices (curricular and co-curricular activities) and to investigate the effects of those practices and other factors on retention, student success, academic/career pathways and degree attainment, including transfer, and entry into the workforce or graduate programs in STEM [1], [8], [11], [12], [14], [17]. See Section IV.B for additional details.

Prospective Principal Investigators (PIs) whose primary goal is to develop, test and evaluate new resources for STEM learning and teaching should submit proposals to the Improving Undergraduate STEM Education (IUSE: EHR) program. Likewise, PIs looking to conduct foundational research on factors associated with student success or degree attainment, academic or career pathways, workforce development, or the impact of financial aid on student outcomes should submit proposals to the EHR Core Research (ECR) Program.

II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A. Overview

The S-STEM program provides Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) with funds for scholarships to encourage and enable low-income academically talented students with demonstrated financial need to enter the workforce or graduate study following completion of associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degrees in STEM. Recognizing that scholarships alone cannot address low retention and graduation rates in STEM, the program also supports the implementation and testing of existing effective evidence-based curricular and co-curricular activities (e.g., evidence-based practices; professional and workforce development activities) featuring: (1) close involvement of STEM faculty, (2) student mentoring, (3) provisions of academic and student support, (4) adaptation of existing high quality evidence-based practices, and (5) recognition of S-STEM Scholars. Successful projects include involvement of the Offices of Financial Aid, Offices of Student Services, Offices of Institutional Research, and business and industry [2], [13], [18], [19].

Proposals with a strong focus on workforce development are encouraged to partner with business, industry, or local community organizations. Proposals with a strong focus on the transfer or advancement of students from one educational level to another should collaborate with appropriate institutional partners (for example proposals focused on the transfer of students from 2-year institutions to 4-year institutions should include 2-year institutions and 4-year institutions or proposals focusing on the advancement of undergraduate students to graduate programs should include institutions with undergraduate programs and institutions with graduate programs).

Proposals should include a literature review that establishes the basis for the proposed project activities along with a description of how the project plans to generate knowledge about student success and degree attainment in STEM. Project activities associated
with knowledge generation should be informed by the Common Guidelines for Education Research and Development (http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2013/nsf13126/nsf13126.pdf). Formative evaluation should be used to improve local implementation and outcomes of financial support and academic and student supports. Summative evaluation should assess project outcomes and accomplishments and document lessons learned for accountability purposes.

B. Program Goals

The goals of the S-STEM program are:

1. To increase the recruitment, retention, student success, and graduation (including student transfer) of low-income academically talented students with demonstrated financial need who are pursuing associate, baccalaureate, graduate degrees in STEM and enter the STEM workforce or graduate programs in STEM.
2. To adapt, implement, and study models, effective evidence-based practices, and/or strategies that contribute to understanding how factors or existing high quality evidence-based practices affect recruitment, retention, student success, academic/career pathways, and/or degree attainment (including student transfer) in STEM of low-income academically talented students with demonstrated financial need.
3. To contribute to the implementation and sustainability of effective evidence-based curricular and co-curricular activities (e.g., evidence-based practices; professional and workforce development activities) for low-income academically talented students with demonstrated financial need, pursuing undergraduate or graduate education, and entry into the workforce or graduate programs in STEM.

IHEs are expected to establish selection criteria for scholarships. To receive scholarships, students must demonstrate academic talent and financial need. They must be U.S. citizens, permanent residents, nationals, or refugees. See Section IV.B. Scholarship Recipients for additional details.

IHEs are expected to develop and maintain student cohorts and provide S-STEM Scholars with S-STEM faculty mentors. It is expected that scholarship recipients will achieve at least one of the following outcomes by the end of the scholarship award period:

- Attain an associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degree and enter the workforce or a graduate program in STEM;
- Transfer from an associate degree program to a baccalaureate degree program or advance from an undergraduate program to a graduate program in STEM;
- Successfully overcome one or more of an institution’s self-identified attrition points, which have been described in the institution’s proposal.

C. Program Strands

Strand 1: S-STEM Institutional Capacity Building seeks to increase the participation of institutions that have limited experience with designing and conducting activities, as described in the description of the S-STEM Design and Development projects. Strand 1 provides funds to establish new collaborative partnerships and infrastructure that support these types of projects: (1) to provide scholarships; (2) to advance the adaptation, implementation and understanding of evidence-based academic and student support activities for NSF S-STEM Scholars and other academically talented low-income students pursuing STEM degrees, (3) to increase retention, student success and graduation in STEM, and (4) to test strategies for systematically exploring student academic and career pathways in STEM in ways that are congruent with the context of the institution.

IHEs eligible to submit proposals to Strand 1 are institutions that have not had or do not currently have awards funded by the S-STEM program or the STEM Talent Expansion (STEP) program.

Proposers are encouraged to work with Offices of Institutional Research or responsible parties or to contact researchers whose interests are in understanding undergraduate/graduate STEM education or workforce development. Projects should generate knowledge about factors and/or activities associated with student success and degree attainment. Proposers are encouraged to utilize data analytics to examine patterns in institutional student data that describe and predict the successful completion of student academic and career paths.

A Strand 1 project leadership and management team must be led by a PI who is a STEM faculty member currently teaching in one of the S-STEM disciplines and includes a STEM administrator. The leadership and management team should also include an institutional, educational, or social science researcher who studies higher education.

Strand 1 proposals may request up to $650,000 for 5 years. At least 60% of the total amount requested must be requested for scholarships. In addition, funds should be requested to support the adaptation and implementation of existing high quality evidence-based academic and student support activities; the investigation of factors or evidence-based academic and student support activities to determine their effectiveness in recruiting, retaining, and graduating students in STEM; and the management and evaluation of the project.

For an award with a duration of 5 years, a Third-Year Review is required.

Strand 2: S-STEM Design and Development seeks to leverage S-STEM funds with institutional efforts and infrastructure to increase recruitment, retention, student success, transfer, if appropriate, academic/career pathways, and degree attainment in STEM, with emphasis on low-income academically talented students with demonstrated financial need. Strand 2 projects are expected to:

- Establish scholarship programs that provide strong academic and student support (e.g., adaptation and implementation of existing high quality evidence-based practices; professional and workforce development activities) to increase student success and degree attainment (including student transfer, if appropriate);
- Increase retention, student success, transfer (if appropriate), and graduation in STEM and the quality of the STEM workforce;
- Have strong STEM faculty commitment and involvement;
- Adapt, implement, and study effective evidence-based curricular and co-curricular activities and professional development that are tailored to students, STEM faculty, and different types of institutional contexts;
- Focus on cognitive or non-cognitive aspects of student experiences and success (such as research experiences, internships, participation in student cohorts, the mentor/mentee relationship; self-efficacy, identity); and
- Advance adaptation, implementation, knowledge generation, and understanding of how high quality evidence-based practices and strategies impact student outcomes.

Proposers are encouraged to utilize data analytics to examine patterns in institutional student data that describe and predict the successful completion of student academic and career pathways.

Within Strand 2, two types of projects are possible.
Design and Development, Type 1: Single Institution

Single Institution projects are focused on well-documented institutional needs or concerns. The program strongly encourages proposals to build on completed needs analyses or institutional self-studies. This type of project must be led by a PI who is a STEM faculty member currently teaching in one of the S-STEM disciplines and who is a member of the leadership and management team. The leadership and management team should also include a STEM administrator and an institutional, educational, or social science researcher.

Proposals for Strand 2 - Single Institution may request up to $1.0 million for 5 years. At least 60% of the total amount requested must be requested for scholarships. In addition, funds should be requested to support the adaptation and implementation of existing high quality evidence-based academic and student support activities; the investigation of factors or evidence-based academic and student support activities to determine their effectiveness in recruiting, retaining, and graduating students in STEM; and the management and evaluation of the project.

Proposals may also include a focus on student transfer.

For an award with a duration of 5 years, the project will be reviewed during its third year to determine whether satisfactory progress has been made, with continued funding contingent on the result of the third-year review.

Design and Development, Type 2: Multi-Institutional Consortia

The Strand 2 – Type 2 Multi-Institutional Consortia supports institutional collaborations that focus on a common problem or issue. For example, a collaboration among community colleges and four-year colleges or universities may focus on issues associated with the transfer of students from 2-year institutions to 4-year programs or a consortium of institutions may focus on investigating factors, such as self-efficacy or identity, associated with student success or degree attainment. Multi-Institutional Consortia projects are expected to:

- Adapt, implement, examine, or validate models or factors, effective practices, strategies, that affect recruitment; retention; transfer, if appropriate; academic/career pathways; degree attainment; other important student outcomes; and/or entry into the STEM workforce or graduate programs in STEM, and
- Establish strong technical assistance and processes that support and manage project activities across institutions involved in the collaborative effort.

Multi-Institutional Consortia projects are managed by leadership and management teams composed of faculty members who are currently teaching in an S-STEM discipline(s), STEM administrators, and institutional, educational, or social science researchers. In multi-institutional projects the PI must be either a faculty member currently teaching in one of the S-STEM disciplines or a researcher whose expertise is in institutional, educational, or social science research in higher education, a proposal whose Principal Investigator is an educational or social science researcher does not count against the limit on the number of proposals submitted by an institution.

Proposals with a focus on multi-institutional efforts may request up to $5.0 million for 5 years. At least 60% of the total requested amount must support scholarships to academically talented low-income students. In addition, funds should be requested to support the adaptation and implementation of a common set of existing high quality evidence-based academic and student support activities; the investigation of factors or evidence-based academic and student support activities to determine their effectiveness in recruiting, retaining, and graduating students in STEM; and the management and evaluation of the project.

The level of funding requested should be congruent with the focus, scope, and size of the effort.

For an award with a duration of 5 years, the project will be reviewed during its third year to determine whether satisfactory progress has been made, with continued funding contingent on the result of the third-year review.

Conferences and Workshops: In addition to the Strands above the S-STEM program also supports a small number of conferences, workshops, and special projects that generate knowledge to better understand issues in the recruitment, retention, student success, degree attainment, and entry into the STEM workforce by low-income students. The conferences and workshops are expected to be consistent with the duration of the event and the number of participants, but the cost will normally not exceed a total of $250,000 per event. It is expected that the conferences and workshops will be outcomes-based, and that the final report should contain a statement of the impacts of the event 12-18 months after completion of the event(s). Proposals for conferences and workshops may be submitted at any time during the year, but the proposers should plan on at least 10 months lead time to allow for review and processing of the proposal. A prospective PI is encouraged to contact an S-STEM program officer to discuss the conference or workshop prior to submitting a proposal.

For Strand 1, Strand 2 and Conference and Workshop proposals please refer below to Section V.A.5, for details about the components of a proposal's project description.

D. Resources

The following sources may be of interest to proposers of S-STEM projects. They represent some of the literature on the effectiveness of scholarships/financial aid, evidence-based educational practices, student supports for degree attainment, and entry into the STEM workforce. The list is not meant to be a complete bibliography.

[1] ATE Central (https://atecentral.net)
III. AWARD INFORMATION

The number and size of awards will vary depending upon the scope of projects and availability of funds. Approximately $70 - $95 million is expected to be available annually, for new and continuing activities to support approximately 60 - 80 new S-STEM Awards.

Awards to support Strand 1 - Institutional Capacity Building projects may not exceed $650,000 for 5 years. Awards to support Strand 2 - Design and Development Type 1 Single Institution projects may not exceed $1.0 million for 5 years. Awards to support Strand 2 - Design and Development Type 2 Multi-Institutional Consortia projects may not exceed $5.0 million for 5 years. The level of funding requested should be based on the focus, scope, and size of the effort.

IV. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Who May Submit Proposals:

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education (as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965) in the United States and its territories that grant associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degrees in the S-STEM disciplines listed in Section IV.B. are invited to submit proposals.

Who May Serve as PI:

For Strand 1 - Institutional Capacity Building and Strand 2 - Design and Development Type 1 Single Institution projects, the Principal Investigator must be a faculty member currently teaching in one of the S-STEM disciplines listed in Section IV.B. who can provide the leadership required to ensure the success of the project. Projects involving more than one department within an institution are eligible, but a single Principal Investigator must accept overall management responsibility. Other members of the S-STEM project leadership and management team may be listed as Co-Principal Investigators.
For Strand 2 - Design and Development Type 2 Multi-institutional Consortia projects, the Principal Investigator must be a faculty member currently teaching in one of the S-STEM disciplines listed in Section IV.B. or an institutional, educational, or social science researcher who can provide the leadership required to ensure the success of the project. A consortium project must have a Principal Investigator who accepts overall management responsibility. Other members of the S-STEM senior project leadership and management team may be listed as Co-Principal Investigators or PIs on collaborative research proposals.

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:

An Institution may submit one proposal (either as a single institution or as subawardee or a member of a Collaborative Research project) from each constituent school or college that awards degrees in an eligible field. See Additional Eligibility Information below for more details.

Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or Co-PI:

There are no restrictions or limits.

Additional Eligibility Info:

A. Institutions

1. An institution may submit one proposal from each constituent college or school that awards eligible degrees. (For example, a university with a College of Engineering, a School of Life Sciences, and a College of Arts and Sciences could submit one proposal from each for a total of three proposals. However, within a College of Engineering, if the Department of Electrical Engineering were submitting a proposal, a proposal from the Department of Mechanical Engineering could be submitted only in a subsequent year. The two departments in this example could choose to submit a single joint proposal.)

2. An institution without constituent schools (for example, a 4-year college or a community college) may submit one proposal each year.

3. An institution that is part of a larger system is considered separate for proposal submission purposes if it is geographically separate from the other campus(es) and has its own chief academic officer.

4. For Strand 2 - Design and Development Type 2 Multi-Institutional Consortia, a proposal whose Principal Investigator is an educational or social science researcher in a program other than STEM does not count against the limit on the number of proposals submitted by institutions from S-STEM disciplines.

B. Scholarship Recipients

Criteria for eligibility for the NSF S-STEM supported scholarships are established by the institution(s). S-STEM scholarship recipients will be selected by the awardee institution(s), but recipients must:

- Be citizens of the United States, nationals of the United States (as defined in section 101(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act), aliens admitted as refugees under section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, or aliens lawfully admitted to the United States for permanent residence. Please note that Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) individuals are ineligible for support from this solicitation unless they meet the requirements listed in the first sentence of this bullet;
- Be enrolled full time in a program leading to an associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degree in one of the following disciplines for each term for which a student receives a scholarship: Biological sciences (except medicine and other clinical fields); physical sciences, including physics, chemistry, astronomy, and materials science; mathematical sciences; computer and information sciences; geosciences; engineering; or psychology and other social science areas associated with the preceding fields (e.g., biotechnology, chemical technology, engineering technology, information technology);
- Demonstrate academic ability or potential;
- Be low-income and demonstrate financial need, defined for undergraduate students by the U.S. Department of Education rules for need-based Federal financial aid. Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), or, for graduate students, defined as financial eligibility for Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN).

These rules define financial need for undergraduates as the Cost of Attendance (COA) for an institution minus the Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) for the student (see http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html). The COA, determined by each educational institution, is the total amount it will cost a student to go to school, including tuition and fees; on-campus room and board (or a housing and food allowance for off-campus students); allowances for books, supplies, transportation, loan fees, dependent care, and costs related to a disability; and miscellaneous expenses. The EFC is determined by the FAFSA form and represents the expected family contribution toward the COA (http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/). It is recommended that the PI consult the campus financial aid office for more information regarding the institutional COA and the calculation of student financial need.

V. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

Full Proposal Preparation Instructions: Proposers may opt to submit proposals in response to this Program Solicitation via Grants.gov or via the NSF FastLane system.

- Full proposals submitted via FastLane: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the general guidelines contained in the NSF Grant Proposal Guide (GPG). The complete text of the GPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=gpg. Paper copies of the GPG may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-7827 or by e-mail from nsfpubs@nsf.gov. Proposers are reminded to identify this program solicitation number in the program solicitation block on the NSF Cover Sheet For Proposal to the National Science Foundation. Compliance with this requirement is critical to determining the relevant proposal processing guidelines. Failure to submit this information may delay processing.
Full proposals submitted via Grants.gov: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation via Grants.gov should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov. The complete text of the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: (http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide). To obtain copies of the Application Guide and Application Forms Package, click on the Apply tab on the Grants.gov site, then click on the Apply Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Application Instructions link and enter the funding opportunity number, (the program solicitation number without the NSF prefix) and press the Download Package button. Paper copies of the Grants.gov Application Guide also may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-7827 or by e-mail from nsfpubs@nsf.gov.

In determining which method to utilize in the electronic preparation and submission of the proposal, please note the following:

Collaborative Proposals. All collaborative proposals submitted as separate submissions from multiple organizations must be submitted via the NSF FastLane system. Chapter II, Section D.5 of the Grant Proposal Guide provides additional information on collaborative proposals.

See Chapter II.C.2 of the GPG for guidance on the required sections of a full research proposal submitted to NSF. Please note that the proposal preparation instructions provided in this program solicitation may deviate from the GPG instructions.

The following instructions supplement the guidelines in the GPG and NSF Grants.gov Application Guide.

Full Proposal Content

1. Cover Sheet

While filling out the cover sheet in FastLane, it is important to choose the program solicitation number indicated on the cover of this document (“NSF Scholarships in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics”) from the list of programs in the “NSF Unit Consideration” section. This choice must be specified in order to have FastLane access the DUE Project Data Form, which is required for S-STEM proposals.

An informative title for the proposed S-STEM project must be provided on the appropriate line. Please use the full project title and refrain from using the “S-STEM” name or acronym, “NSF,” or your institution’s name in the project title.

2. Project Data Form

A DUE Project Data Form (NSF Form 1295: Project Data Form) must be completed for all proposals. The information on this form is used to direct proposals to appropriate reviewers and to determine the characteristics of projects supported by DUE. In FastLane, this form appears in the list of forms for the proposal only after the appropriate Program Solicitation number has been selected (indicated on the cover of this document) and indicated on the proposal cover sheet that has been saved. Select the appropriate Strand and Type in the dropdown menu.

3. Project Summary

The Project Summary is a one-page description of the proposed project that consists of an overview, a statement on Intellectual Merit, and a statement on Broader Impacts. In the overview, provide a brief description of the S-STEM project including the number of scholarships to be provided, the discipline areas to be served by the scholarship funds, the objectives of the project, the expected retention or transfer and graduation rates, and basic information about the student recruitment, selection, support, and career placement services to be provided as part of this S-STEM project.

The project summary MUST explicitly address both Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts in separate statements. See Section VI. A., Proposal Review Process, for a description of the two criteria. NSF will return without review proposals that do not address both criteria in the Project Summary.

4. Table of Contents

The Table of Contents is system-generated and cannot be edited.

5. Project Description

The Project Description must conform to GPG formatting requirements and must not exceed 15 single-spaced pages. For legibility, 12-point type and page numbers are preferred. See GPG for more details. Proposals that exceed the page limit will be returned without review. The Project Description should contain the following information:

a. Results from Prior NSF Support

Report on the results from related prior NSF support in accordance with Grant Proposal Guide requirements (see Chapter II.C.2.d(iii) of the GPG). If there have been any prior S-STEM or Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Expansion Program (STEP) awards at the institution, the proposed project should build on the experience from the prior or ongoing project. Proposals should include quantitative and qualitative outcomes of any current or former project(s) and how the experience has informed plans for the current project. This is especially true when the same or related disciplines are involved, even if there is no overlap in personnel. Proposers may use the NSF web search [http://go.usa.gov/X5F, at the bottom of the program webpage select the link "What Has Been Funded (Recent Awards Made Through This Program, with Abstracts)" to search for prior awards in the S-STEM program. Required information is listed below.

Results from prior S-STEM awards should include at a minimum: Award number(s); amount of the scholarship; number of scholarship recipients; number and percentage of recipients transferring from 2-year institutions to 4-year programs (if appropriate); number of recipients graduating; percentage of recipients graduating; and number and percentage of recipients leaving the program.

Results from prior STEP awards should include at a minimum: Award number(s); amount of the award(s); number of students who participated in project activities; description of the activities; retention and graduation rates in STEM programs participating in the STEP project at baseline; expected increase in the number and percentage of students graduating with degrees in targeted STEM programs; and actual increase in the number of students graduating with a degree in targeted STEM programs.

For S-STEM projects that are on-going, the following information must be reported: Award number(s); amount of the scholarship; number of scholarship recipients; number and percentage of recipients transferring from 2-year institutions to 4-year programs (if appropriate); number and percentage of recipients retained or graduating in STEM; and number and percentage of recipients leaving the program.

For on-going STEP projects, the following information must be reported: Award number; amount of the award; number of students...
who are participating in project activities; description of the activities; retention and graduation rates in STEM programs participating in the project at baseline; expected increase in number and percentage of students graduating with a degree in targeted STEM programs; and current retention rate of students participating in STEP activities.

Descriptions of the results from prior S-STEM and/or STEP support must discuss: (1) lessons learned from the implementation of project activities and outcomes of the project(s) and (2) how these lessons influenced the proposed project.

b. Project Objectives and Plans

The project should have specific objectives that reflect the goals of the S-STEM program and local needs, as well as specific plans to select students, encourage them to achieve their best academic performance, and enable them to enter the workforce or continue studies in their fields. The project also should have specific plans to implement and investigate existing high quality evidence-based practices and professional and workforce development activities (e.g., academic and student support activities) and to contribute to the knowledge base about what works for whom in college retention, student success, and graduation (to include transfer, if appropriate) in STEM.

c. Significance of Project and Rationale

A proposal must state and justify the annual and total number of unique students who will be awarded scholarships over the duration of the award period, the number of scholarships awarded annually, the total number of scholarships awarded for the award period, the duration of the scholarship, and the annual and maximum amount of the scholarship for a scholarship recipient.

The proposal should address how the goals of the S-STEM program will be met (see Program Description, Section II). In addition, if appropriate, it should include information on the demographics of the departments or programs affected by the scholarships, including number of majors and number of graduates per year, as well as information on overall enrollment and retention within the institution and programs involved.

A rationale for the number of scholarships and the scholarship amount requested should also be provided. Specifically, baseline data from Institutional Research Offices should include: (1) current student demographics and enrollment from institutions awarding scholarships; (2) current student demographics and enrollment for each S-STEM discipline that is included in the proposed project; (3) current 1-year retention rates for each S-STEM discipline that is included in the proposal; and (4) current graduation rates for each S-STEM discipline that is included in the proposal. This baseline data will also be useful for project evaluation. It may be helpful to consult with the financial aid office at the institution to determine typical financial need for the proposed cohort of students (or for some larger group of students if information on the smaller cohort is not easily available). While there is flexibility within a project budget after a grant is made, the size of the budget request must be closely related in the proposal to a realistic estimate of student need.

For S-STEM disciplines included in the proposal, expected outcomes should include, at a minimum: expected demographics and enrollment for the S-STEM disciplines that are included in the proposal; expected year to year retention or transfer rates for S-STEM disciplines that are included in the proposal; expected graduation rates for each of the S-STEM disciplines included in the proposal and/or expected student outcomes documenting students successfully overcoming one or more of an institution’s self-identified attrition points.

See Section II.B for a list of program outcomes.

d. Activities on Which the Current Project Builds

S-STEM projects should build on the research literature and existing academic and student supports and program elements. Proposals should discuss such academic and student supports and program elements that are relevant to the S-STEM project and describe ways in which the S-STEM project will use or enhance the structures. Proposals should describe and justify the adaptation of academic and student supports and program elements implemented for S-STEM Scholars and other low-income students. If the institution or a member of a consortium of institutions has had a previous S-STEM and/or STEP award, show how the proposed project will build on lessons learned from these efforts.

S-STEM projects should draw on the research literature and discuss the issues or gaps in the literature that the project plans to address.

e. S-STEM Project Management Plan

S-STEM projects must be guided by a management plan in which the key personnel and project logistics are defined. The roles and responsibilities of the personnel involved should be clear.

For all projects the project leadership team must include a faculty member currently teaching in an S-STEM discipline as listed in Section IV.B, a STEM administrator, and an institutional, educational, or social science researcher.

The project must involve S-STEM faculty, as mentors, in addition to the PI, and it is strongly encouraged that the project involve staff from offices of institutional research, student services, financial aid, and/or admissions. These additional personnel may be included as Co-PIs, depending on institutional policy. In any case, the proposal must describe specific roles of each person in the project. The PI will have overall responsibility for administering the project and for interacting with NSF.

Plans must be described for activities such as recruitment, selection, and retention of students; studies to determine the effectiveness of project activities; maintenance of S-STEM records; coordination of data collection, analysis, and reporting responsibilities; oversight of student supports; and implementation of a process by which students who lose S-STEM eligibility will be replaced by new students.

See Section V.A.8 below for further details on Budget, Budget Justification, and Allowable Costs.

f. Student Selection Process and Criteria

The program requires that the students meet the requirements for citizenship, major, academic potential, and need that are outlined in Section IV.B, Additional Eligibility Information, Scholarship Recipients. Projects should have additional selection criteria that reflect the local program. S-STEM scholars must be able to demonstrate their eligibility in each semester or quarter of S-STEM support.

The selection process for scholarship recipients should include indicators of academic merit and other indicators of likely professional success. Multiple indicators may be appropriate in gauging both academic merit (e.g., grade point average, placement test results) and professionalism (e.g., motivation, ability to manage time and resources, communication skills).

Selection criteria must be flexible enough to accommodate applicants who come from diverse backgrounds (e.g., geographic and with diverse career goals). The program encourages projects to recruit a diverse applicant pool that is inclusive of, but not limited to,
Likewise, each institution determines measures of academic potential for its students. Principal investigators developing S-STEM funding potential, NSF must rely on local financial aid office policies about management of student aid and scholarship funds. NSF provides that students are full-time if classified as full-time by their local institution. Similarly, NSF cannot dictate financial aid policy for their students. Thus, rather than defining a specific number of hours for full-time classification, S-STEM provides the standard U.S. Department of Education guidelines for determining financial need for low-income students as well as allowable educational expenses. NSF, however, cannot prescribe the way in which local financial aid offices or departments develop policies or manage their students. Thus, rather than defining a specific number of hours for full-time classification, S-STEM provides that students are full-time if classified as full-time by their local institution. Similarly, NSF cannot dictate financial aid policy to institutions. While we hope that our broad interpretation of allowable educational expenses will be used to calculate need and funding potential, NSF must rely on local financial aid office policies about management of student aid and scholarship funds. Likewise, each institution determines measures of academic potential for its students. Principal investigators developing S-STEM proposals should talk over these issues with appropriate financial aid offices as well as their discipline faculty in developing policies and criteria that are included in the S-STEM proposal. A proposal must include its definition of a “low-income” student.

S-STEM projects often include enhancements such as seminars, field trips, social activities, student-faculty interaction outside the classroom, and possibly other support services. There are several considerations related to special features of the S-STEM program that deserve more detailed description.

S-STEM is not an appropriate program for supporting REU Supplements. Other examples of student support activities to consider include:

- Recruitment of students to higher education programs and careers in the S-STEM disciplines;
- Curricular activities such as the inclusion of active learning in gateway courses;
- Support and mentoring of students by peers and other professionals;
- Academic support services such as tutoring, study-groups, or supplemental instruction programs;
- Industry experiences, internship opportunities, and research opportunities;
- Community building and support among S-STEM scholars within the institution;
- Participation in local or regional professional, industrial or scientific meetings and conferences; and
- Career counseling and job placement services for S-STEM scholars.

For support services and programs that already exist, describe how they will be adapted to meet the specific objectives of the S-STEM project. Partnerships with industry are encouraged.

See Section V.A.8, Proposal Preparation Instructions, for a discussion of budget details.

h. Quality Educational Programs

Institutions should provide evidence of the quality of their educational programs, particularly those in the targeted disciplines. Where appropriate, cite external accreditations in the S-STEM disciplines (for example, ABET for engineering).

i. Generation of Knowledge

All projects should advance understanding about the factors and/or activities associated with retention, student success, transfer, academic/career pathways, and degree attainment. Knowledge generation should be based on the information needs of the institution; draw on the research literature on evidence-based practices, student success, and degree attainment; state questions that guide the investigations; and describe how the questions will be answered.

j. Assessment and Evaluation

S-STEM projects should have clear and specific plans for assessment and evaluation. The evaluation should include formative evaluation for project improvement and summative evaluation to assess and document project outcomes, accomplishments, and lessons learned. At a minimum, the evaluator must be external to the project, but not necessarily to the institution. The evaluator cannot be a Co-PI or other Senior Personnel on the project. S-STEM projects are required to participate in regular NSF-led data collection activities to track the students. Beyond the impact on students, S-STEM projects should collect data to judge impact on the departments, disciplines involved, and the institution. The S-STEM proposal should identify appropriate assessment and evaluation plans for project improvement, as well as plans for programmatic evaluation at the end of the project for accountability purposes. Each S-STEM proposal should describe evaluation plans that are clearly aligned with the stated goals of the project. The evaluation design should match the scope of the project.

k. Dissemination

The results of successful projects will be of potential interest to other faculty, staff, students, other stakeholders, and the community of which the institution is a part, as well as to student services and financial aid professionals and others who operate scholarship programs. The proposal should include a plan to report on the project and its successes and lessons learned to appropriate audiences.

l. Advice to Proposers

There are several considerations related to special features of the S-STEM program that deserve more detailed description.
The following instructions refer to the NSF proposal budget form. The sections and budget line designations correspond to the curricular and co-curricular activities and student support services) that are common to all members of the consortium, contributions to knowledge use and generation, project evaluation, and project management.

A project is expected to make a contribution to the STEM education knowledge base. The complexity, scope, and size of those contributions should be a) commensurate with the experience and expertise of the institution in this area, b) aligned with the needs identified in an institutional scan (where greater understanding of an issue would be beneficial), c) aligned with the interests of the leadership and management team, and d) appropriate for the budgeted resources specified for this area of the project.

A cohesive proposal clearly articulates the rationale for decisions and the details regarding how project components fit together in a logical framework. Supporting data, the educational literature, or lessons learned should be presented, where appropriate.

m. Project Description Content Checklist

In summary, the proposal should clearly describe the plan for implementing a program with the goals and characteristics outlined in the preceding text. The proposal should include, within the project description (limited to 15 single-spaced pages), the following:

- Results from prior NSF support, with particular emphasis on any prior S-STEM or STEP awards;
- Statement of the project objectives and plans;
- Discussion of the project's significance, including demographic information and rationale for the number of scholarships and the scholarship amount requested;
- Statement and justification of the annual and total number of unique students who will be awarded scholarships over the duration of the award period, the number of scholarships awarded annually, the total number of scholarships awarded for the award period, the duration of the scholarship, and the annual and maximum amount of the scholarship for a scholarship recipient;
- Discussion of activities on which the project builds (particularly connections to any previous or current S-STEM or STEP awards at the institution);
- Description of the management plan, including discussion of the role of faculty in the disciplines in the operation of the project;
- Outline of the student selection process and criteria;
- Description of the implementation and testing of curricular and co-curricular activities, student support services and programs, and their impact on students;
- Contribution to the knowledge base on how factors or evidence-based practices affect student success and degree attainment in STEM;
- Evidence of the quality of the institution's educational programs;
- Plans for project assessment and evaluation (formative and summative); and
- Plans for dissemination.

6. References Cited

References should draw on the discipline-based education research literature, on the literature on STEM teaching and learning, and on the research literature on higher education.

7. Biographical Sketches

Include a 2-page biographical sketch (following the instructions in the GPG) for the Principal Investigator and each listed Co-Principal Investigator and/or Senior Personnel.

8. Budget, Budget Justification, and Allowable Costs

Provide a budget for each year of support requested.

The maximum duration for a Strand 1 project is expected to be 5 years. The maximum S-STEM request may not exceed $650,000. At least 60% of the total requested amount must go to scholarships to academically talented low-income students with demonstrated financial need. Funds should support the implementation and testing of existing high quality evidence-based practices (e.g., curricular and co-curricular activities and student support services), contributions to knowledge use and generation, project evaluation, and project management.

The maximum duration for a Strand 2 for Design and Development – Type 1 Single Institution project is expected to be 5 years. The maximum S-STEM request may not exceed $1.0 million. At least 60% of the total amount requested must go to scholarships to academically talented low-income students with demonstrated financial need. Funds should support the implementation and testing of existing high quality evidence-based practices (e.g., curricular and co-curricular activities and student support services), contributions to knowledge use and generation, project evaluation, and project management.

The maximum duration for a Strand 2 for Design and Development - Type 2 Multi-Institutional Consortia project is expected to be 5 years. The maximum S-STEM request may not exceed $5.0 million and is dependent on focus, size, and scope. At least 60% of the total requested amount must go to supporting scholarships for academically talented low-income students with demonstrated financial need. Funds should support the implementation and testing of existing high quality evidence-based practices (e.g., curricular and co-curricular activities and student support services) that are common to all members of the consortium, contributions to knowledge use and generation, project evaluation, and project management.

The following instructions refer to the NSF proposal budget form. The sections and budget line designations correspond to the
All allocations for scholarships should be indicated in NSF budget form section F, "Participant Support," line F1 - "Stipends" of the FastLane budget form. Scholarships may be requested for up to $10,000 per student per year. Because many students may not be eligible for the maximum scholarship amount of $10,000, the proposal should explain how the number of scholarships requested and the total amount of scholarship funds requested were determined.

Faculty salary requests must be accompanied by an appropriate indication of the fraction of academic or summer months to be paid by the grant.

For Strands 1 and Strand 2 Type 1 Single Institution, funds must be requested for expenses related to supporting the implementation and testing of high quality extant curricular and co-curricular activities, student support, project evaluation, and project management. These costs may include funds associated with personnel required to implement project activities. These direct costs must be assigned to the appropriate NSF budget categories on the NSF budget form and must be explained in the budget justification. Refer to the GPG instructions for appropriate categories. Items that are for direct support of scholar participants (for example, student travel to professional meetings or meeting registrations) should be listed in the "Participant Support" section on lines F.2, "Travel" or F.3, "Subsistence." Other costs should be listed in other sections of the budget as appropriate. Do not enter any costs on line G.6. "Other Direct Costs" - "Other" or F.4. "Participant Support Costs" - "Other."

Indirect costs (NSF budget form line I) are subject to the institution's current Federally negotiated indirect cost agreement. The total budget request (sum of direct and indirect costs to be entered on budget line J) must not exceed the amount set for each type of project. Prospective PIs should consult with their university Office of Sponsored Programs about the calculation of indirect costs.

For Strand 2 - Type 2 Multi-Institutional Consortia projects, at least 60% of the total requested amount must go to supporting scholarships for academically talented low-income students with demonstrated financial need. Funds must be requested for expenses related to the implementation and testing of high quality extant curricular and co-curricular activities or factors common to all members of the consortium, student support activities, contributions to knowledge use and generation, project evaluation, and project management. Indirect costs (NSF budget form line I) are subject to the institutions’ current federally-negotiated indirect cost agreement. The total of all direct and indirect costs for the Multi-Institutional consortia projects are capped at $5.0 million.

Funds should also be included for the PI or another member of the leadership team to attend meetings of grantees and other researchers that may be organized by community stakeholders such as professional societies or other scholarly interest groups.

9. Current and Pending Support

Provide a list of Current and Pending Support for the Principal Investigator and each Co-Principal Investigator. All investigators should list the S-STEM proposal as a pending project. See GPG for more details.

10. Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources

See GPG Section II.C.2.i.

11. Supplementary Documentation

Evidence of the high quality of academic programs or excellence in student recruitment, support, or career placement may be included as supplementary documentation. Scanned copies of letters of institutional support and letters documenting partnership commitments (e.g., industry partners for student internships) should also be included as supplementary documentation. Supplementary documentation is limited to 10 pages. Do not send paper copies to NSF.

B. Budgetary Information

Cost Sharing:

Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.

Other Budgetary Limitations:

No other budgetary limitations. As described above, budgetary details are described in section V.A.8.

C. Due Dates

- Full Proposal Deadline(s) (due by 5 p.m. submitter's local time):
  - May 16, 2016
  - April 20, 2017
  - Third Thursday in April, Annually Thereafter

D. FastLane/Grants.gov Requirements

For Proposals Submitted Via FastLane:

To prepare and submit a proposal via FastLane, see detailed technical instructions available at: https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/a1/newstan.htm. For FastLane user support, call the FastLane Help Desk at 1-800-673-6188 or e-mail fastlane@nsf.gov. The FastLane Help Desk answers general technical questions related to the use of the FastLane system. Specific questions related to this program solicitation should be referred to the NSF program staff contact(s) listed in Section VIII of this funding opportunity.

For Proposals Submitted Via Grants.gov:

Before using Grants.gov for the first time, each organization must register to create an institutional profile. Once
With respect to the third principle, even if assessment of Broader Impacts outcomes for particular projects is done at an aggregated level, the following three principles apply:

1. Merit Review Principles

The National Science Foundation strives to invest in a robust and diverse portfolio of projects that creates new knowledge and enables breakthroughs in understanding across all areas of science and engineering research and education. To identify which projects to support, NSF relies on a merit review process that incorporates consideration of both the technical aspects of a proposed project and its potential to contribute more broadly to advancing NSF's mission "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense; and for other purposes." NSF makes every effort to conduct a fair, competitive, transparent merit review process for the selection of projects.

1. Merit Review Principles

These principles are to be given due diligence by PIs and organizations when preparing proposals and managing projects, by reviewers when reading and evaluating proposals, and by NSF program staff when determining whether or not to recommend proposals for funding and while overseeing awards. Given that NSF is the primary federal agency charged with nurturing and supporting excellence in basic research and education, the following three principles apply:

- All NSF projects should be of the highest quality and have the potential to advance, if not transform, the frontiers of knowledge.
- NSF projects, in the aggregate, should contribute more broadly to achieving societal goals. These "Broader Impacts" may be accomplished through the research itself, through activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project. The project activities may be based on previously established and/or innovative methods and approaches, but in either case must be well justified.
- 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. If the size of the activity is limited, evaluation of that activity in isolation is not likely to be meaningful. Thus, assessing the effectiveness of these activities may best be done at a higher, more aggregated, level than the individual project.

With respect to the third principle, even if assessment of Broader Impacts outcomes for particular projects is done at an aggregated
level, PIs are expected to be accountable for carrying out the activities described in the funded project. Thus, individual projects should include clearly stated goals, specific descriptions of the activities that the PI intends to do, and a plan in place to document the outputs of those activities.

These three merit review principles provide the basis for the merit review criteria, as well as a context within which the users of the criteria can better understand their intent.

2. Merit Review Criteria

All NSF proposals are evaluated through use of the two National Science Board approved merit review criteria. In some instances, however, NSF will employ additional criteria as required to highlight the specific objectives of certain programs and activities.

The two merit review criteria are listed below. Both criteria are to be given full consideration during the review and decision-making processes; each criterion is necessary but neither, by itself, is sufficient. Therefore, proposers must fully address both criteria. (GPG Chapter II.C.2.d.i. contains additional information for use by proposers in development of the Project Description section of the proposal.) Reviewers are strongly encouraged to review the criteria, including GPG Chapter II.C.2.d.i., prior to the review of a proposal.

When evaluating NSF proposals, reviewers will be asked to consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers will be asked to evaluate all proposals against two criteria:

- **Intellectual Merit:** The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and
- **Broader Impacts:** The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

The following elements should be considered in the review for both criteria:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to
   a. Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
   b. Benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?

2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?

3. Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?

4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?

5. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through the activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project. NSF values the advancement of scientific knowledge and activities that contribute to achievement of societally relevant outcomes. Such outcomes include, but are not limited to: full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); improved STEM education and educator development at any level; increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology; improved well-being of individuals in society; development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce; increased partnerships between academia, industry, and others; improved national security; increased economic competitiveness of the United States; and enhanced infrastructure for research and education.

Proposers are reminded that reviewers will also be asked to review the Data Management Plan and the Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan, as appropriate.

B. Review and Selection Process

Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation will be reviewed by Panel Review.

Reviewers will be asked to evaluate proposals using two National Science Board approved merit review criteria and, if applicable, additional program specific criteria. A summary rating and accompanying narrative will generally be completed and submitted by each reviewer and/or panel. The Program Officer assigned to manage the proposal's review will consider the advice of reviewers and will formulate a recommendation.

After scientific, technical and programmatic review and consideration of appropriate factors, the NSF Program Officer recommends to the cognizant Division Director whether the proposal should be declined or recommended for award. NSF strives to be able to tell applicants whether their proposals have been declined or recommended for funding within six months. Large or particularly complex proposals or proposals from new awardees may require additional review and processing time. The time interval begins on the deadline or target date, or receipt date, whichever is later. The interval ends when the Division Director acts upon the Program Officer's recommendation.

After programmatic approval has been obtained, the proposals recommended for funding will be forwarded to the Division of Grants and Agreements for review of business, financial, and policy implications. After an administrative review has occurred, Grants and Agreements Officers perform the processing and issuance of a grant or other agreement. Proposers are cautioned that only a Grants and Agreements Officer may make commitments, obligations or awards on behalf of NSF or authorize the expenditure of funds. No commitment on the part of NSF should be inferred from technical or budgetary discussions with a NSF Program Officer. A Principal Investigator or organization that makes financial or personnel commitments in the absence of a grant or cooperative agreement signed by the NSF Grants and Agreements Officer does so at their own risk.

Once an award or declination decision has been made, Principal Investigators are provided feedback about their proposals. In all cases, reviews are treated as confidential documents. Verbatim copies of reviews, excluding the names of the reviewers or any reviewer-identifying information, are sent to the Principal Investigator/Project Director by the Program Officer. In addition, the proposer will receive an explanation of the decision to award or decline funding.
A. Notification of the Award

Notification of the award is made to the submitting organization by a Grants Officer in the Division of Grants and Agreements. Organizations whose proposals are declined will be advised as promptly as possible by the cognizant NSF Program administering the program. Verbatim copies of reviews, not including the identity of the reviewer, will be provided automatically to the Principal Investigator. (See Section VI.B. for additional information on the review process).

B. Award Conditions

An NSF award consists of: (1) the award notice, which includes any special provisions applicable to the award and any numbered amendments thereto; (2) the budget, which indicates the amounts, by categories of expense, on which NSF has based its support (or otherwise communicates any specific approvals or disapprovals of proposed expenditures); (3) the proposal referenced in the award notice; (4) the applicable award conditions, such as Grant General Conditions (GC-1)*; or Research Terms and Conditions* and (5) any announcement or other NSF issuance that may be incorporated by reference in the award notice. Cooperative agreements also are administered in accordance with NSF Cooperative Agreement Financial and Administrative Terms and Conditions (CA-FATC) and the applicable Programmatic Terms and Conditions. NSF awards are electronically signed by an NSF Grants and Agreements Officer and transmitted electronically to the organization via e-mail.

*These documents may be accessed electronically on NSF's Website at http://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/award_conditions.jsp?org=NSF. Paper copies may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-7827 or by e-mail from nspubs@nsf.gov.


C. Reporting Requirements

For all multi-year grants (including both standard and continuing grants), the Principal Investigator must submit an annual project report to the cognizant Program Officer no later than 90 days prior to the end of the current budget period. (Some programs or awards require submission of more frequent project reports). No later than 120 days following expiration of a grant, the PI also is required to submit a final project report, and a project outcomes report for the general public.

Failure to provide the required annual or final project reports, or the project outcomes report, will delay NSF review and processing of any future funding increments as well as any pending proposals for all identified PIs and co-PIs on a given award. PIs should examine the formats of the required reports in advance to assure availability of required data.

PIs are required to use NSF's electronic project-reporting system, available through Research.gov, for preparation and submission of annual and final project reports. Such reports provide information on accomplishments, project participants (individual and organizational), publications, and other specific products and impacts of the project. Submission of the report via Research.gov constitutes certification by the PI that the contents of the report are accurate and complete. The project outcomes report also must be prepared and submitted using Research.gov. This report serves as a brief summary, prepared specifically for the public, of the nature and outcomes of the project. This report will be posted on the NSF website exactly as it is submitted by the PI.


In addition, in response to the need for NSF to report on the operation and success of the S-STEM program, a web-based data collection site has been developed for the purpose of collecting information about program participants.

Each S-STEM PI is required to complete information about each S-STEM scholar and subsequently update the information reported through the web site during each semester of continued S-STEM support. Instructions will be provided shortly after the award to successful grantees. This information must be provided within 30 days of the beginning of each semester or quarter and includes the following information about each S-STEM scholar: name, permanent address, school address, major, career goals, race/ethnicity (student's option to report), disabilities (student's option to report), gender, date of birth, grade point average, participation in an internship (in an S-STEM-related area), and student employment (part-time or full-time; not necessarily in an S-STEM-related area). Any information that would permit identification of individual responses will be held in strict confidence.

Each project with a duration of 5-years will be required to participate in a Third-Year Review that will focus on accomplishments, challenges, changes in the project, and lessons learned. Instructions will be provided shortly after the award to successful grantees.

An external evaluator has been retained to assist in the evaluation process at the NSF program level. This evaluator will use the demographic data and student contact information to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the S-STEM program which includes post-graduation and post-employment assessment. These data are not used to evaluate individual projects.

Projects are required to cooperate and participate in a third-party independent evaluation of the S-STEM program.

VIII. AGENCY CONTACTS

Please note that the program contact information is current at the time of publishing. See program website for any updates to the points of contact.

General inquiries regarding this program should be made to:
IX. OTHER INFORMATION

The NSF website provides the most comprehensive source of information on NSF Directorates (including contact information), programs and funding opportunities. Use of this website by potential proposers is strongly encouraged. In addition, "NSF Update" is an information-delivery system designed to keep potential proposers and other interested parties apprised of new NSF funding opportunities and publications, important changes in proposal and award policies and procedures, and upcoming NSF Grants Conferences. Subscribers are informed through e-mail or the user's Web browser each time new publications are issued that match their identified interests. "NSF Update" also is available on NSF's website.

Grants.gov provides an additional electronic capability to search for Federal government-wide grant opportunities. NSF funding opportunities may be accessed via this mechanism. Further information on Grants.gov may be obtained at http://www.grants.gov.

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