



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
4201 WILSON BOULEVARD  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230

NSF 17-138

## Dear Colleague Letter: Historically Black Colleges and Universities Excellence in Research Program

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September 19, 2017

Dear Colleagues:

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) are a vital asset to the Nation contributing significantly to the education of African Americans and other students. HBCUs also contribute to the research enterprise consistent with the National Science Foundation's (NSF) mission "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and to secure the national defense." To that end, NSF is forming the **HBCU Excellence in Research Program** which will provide strategic opportunities for HBCUs that stimulate sustainable improvement in their research and development capacity and competitiveness.

NSF anticipates announcing the program as part of the next HBCU-Undergraduate Program (HBCU-UP) solicitation revision, which is expected to be released by December 2017. Any proposal of the types described below should be submitted to the HBCU-UP program, but the principal investigator (PI) should identify a secondary program in a research Directorate or Office to which the proposal will be routed for review and eventual funding recommendations. The participating NSF organizations are the Directorates for Biological Sciences (BIO), Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE), Engineering (ENG), Geosciences (GEO), Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS), Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE), and the Office of Integrative Activities (OIA).

NSF anticipates announcing that institutions, on behalf of PIs who must be full-time faculty members at an HBCU, will be eligible to submit the following proposals as part of the HBCU Excellence in Research Program:

1. Projects of up to \$1,000,000 to stimulate improvement in research capacity and competitiveness at HBCUs. Activities eligible for support include, but are not limited to: release time to enable faculty members to conduct research, visits by faculty members to laboratories at other institutions to learn new methods and techniques, support for research, faculty professional development, support for post-doctoral fellows and students, acquisition or upgrading of research equipment, and collaborative research efforts with partner universities and national laboratories. Projects must have a research focus in one of the

research areas supported by NSF, a direct connection to the long-term plans of the host department(s) and the institutional mission, and plans for expanding institutional research capacity.

2. Research projects for up to \$500,000 to support research by individual PIs. The project should help to further the PI's research, to improve research capacity at his or her institution, and to involve students in research experiences.

The project description for both types of proposals should contain all of the elements of a standard NSF research proposal.

Prospective PIs are encouraged to contact one of the program directors listed below.

Proposers are also encouraged to consider submitting proposals to the NSF Major Research Instrumentation (MRI) program. Please reference this DCL in the first sentence of the Project Summary if you are submitting an MRI proposal from an HBCU. More information about the MRI program is available at: [https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=5260](https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5260).

Proposals should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the guidance in the NSF *Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG), Part I: Proposal Preparation and Submission Guidelines* available at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg) and any applicable solicitation-specific instructions.

**Contact information for NSF representatives is as follows:**

**BIO**

Casonya Johnson, [casjohns@nsf.gov](mailto:casjohns@nsf.gov)  
Jodie Jawor, [jjawor@nsf.gov](mailto:jjawor@nsf.gov)

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NSF will offer technical assistance and webinars to disseminate information about the HBCU Excellence in Research Program.

Sincerely,

James L. Olds, Assistant Director  
Biological Sciences

Jim Kurose, Assistant Director  
Computer and Information Science and Engineering

William (Jim) Lewis, Acting Assistant Director  
Education and Human Resources

Dawn M. Tilbury, Assistant Director  
Engineering

William E. Easterling, Assistant Director  
Geosciences

James S. Ulvestad, Acting Assistant Director  
Mathematical and Physical Sciences

Fay Cook, Assistant Director  
Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences

Suzanne C. Iacono, Head  
Office of Integrative Activities