NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 18-073

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for NSF 18-541, Smart and Connected Health (SCH) Program

1. Should proposals focus on health outcomes, technology, or both?

2. Does Smart and Connected Health (SCH) require a health organization to be part of the team?

3. The solicitation says that SCH does not accept clinical trials. Does this mean that I cannot conduct evaluative research with human subjects?

4. What is the benefit of applying to this solicitation over a NSF core program or a standing NIH program (e.g., a standard R01)?

5. How is it decided whether NSF or NIH is interested in funding a particular proposal?

6. Who selects the review panel? Is it NSF or NIH?

7. Are separately submitted collaborative proposals permitted or must the proposal only include subawards to collaborating organizations?

8. Is a collaboration plan required in the proposal?

9. Smart and Connected Health is required to have a number of Principal Investigators (PIs and co-PIs). Is there a limit on the number of co-PIs who may appear on a proposal? Also, can be there be dual PIs as in the NIH system?

10. Do we need to address the protection of human subjects within the NSF 15 page project description limit?

11. Will there be jointly funded proposals by NSF and NIH?

12. What about the NIH Institutes/Centers that are not represented in the solicitation?

13. Is there a way for for-profit companies to participate in this solicitation?

14. How much money can I request in my proposed budget?

1. **Should proposals focus on health outcomes, technology, or both?**

   Both. A proposal that is a strong candidate for funding must encompass both health outcomes and technology, i.e., it must address an important health or medical problem, and it must also advance computer science, engineering, and/or social or behavioral science. NSF review panels will evaluate the novelty and merit of the fundamental science as well as the health contributions of the work proposed.

2. **Does Smart and Connected Health (SCH) require a health organization to be part of the team?**

   There is no requirement for a health organization to be part of the team. It is important, however, to have the appropriate health expertise in the proposal. As the solicitation indicates, the objective is to address health-related problems, so it is necessary to demonstrate that health expertise is integrated in the proposal. You may obtain the necessary expertise by including a health research expert: from your organization as a PI, Co-PI, senior personnel, or consultant; via use of a subaward, or through submission of a separately submitted collaborative proposal. Irrespective of which mechanism is utilized, the proposal must demonstrate that you have the necessary expertise to carry out the project as proposed. This is true for both NSF and NIH consideration of submitted proposals.

3. **The solicitation says that SCH does not accept clinical trials. Does this mean that I cannot conduct evaluative research with human subjects?**

   NSF supports investigation of fundamental research questions with broadly applicable results. SCH does support evaluative research with human subjects. Because SCH science is early-stage research, clinical trials are not appropriate and will not be funded. Research that is advanced to a stage that requires clinical trials should be submitted to other programs at appropriate agencies.

4. **What is the benefit of applying to this solicitation over a NSF core program or a standing NIH program (e.g., a standard R01 grant)?**

   The main benefit is that this program has different review criteria. It funds projects that do not fit NSF and NIH core or standing programs, respectively. If the proposed work fits within a core or standing program at either agency, then it will not benefit you to submit to SCH. Rather, SCH proposals must conform to the NSF solicitation requirements and review criteria because they will be submitted to NSF for review. A discussion with the relevant NSF or NIH program officers will be valuable in helping you determine appropriateness of fit to SCH.

5. **How is it decided whether NSF or NIH is interested in funding a particular proposal?**

   NSF and NIH work very closely together to support the SCH program. NSF has allocated funds for this solicitation and NIH will be supporting a portion of projects from its own funds. Decisions are based on funding levels and the missions of the participating agencies. Both agencies aim to fund proposals of the highest quality. A benefit of applying to this program is the potential to be funded by either NSF or NIH.

6. **Who selects the review panel? Is it NSF or NIH?**

   NSF selects each SCH review panel, but with considerable input from NIH to ensure an appropriate range of expertise. Reviewers selected have often served on review panels at NIH. All SCH panels take place at NSF with NIH presence and support.

7. **Are separately submitted collaborative proposals permitted or can the proposal only include subawards to collaborating organizations?**

   Separately submitted collaborative proposals are permitted. A key objective of the program is to develop and encourage integrated multidisciplinary teams of researchers that will work together closely and seamlessly.

8. **Is a collaboration plan required in the proposal?**

   Yes, proposals with more than one investigator must have a collaboration plan. Proposals with multiple investigators without a collaboration plan will be returned without review.

9. **SCH is required to have a number of PIs and co-PIs. Is there a limit on the number of co-PIs who may appear on a proposal? Also, can be there be dual PIs as in the NIH system?**

   There is a limit of one PI and four co-PIs per proposal, but there is also a limit on the available funds. It is important to ensure that the co-PIs' efforts and importance to the project are clear. NSF requires one person be designated as the lead PI, with additional personnel listed as co-PIs or senior personnel.

   NSF permits submission of separately submitted collaborative proposals, that is, linked proposals with separate budgets but a single project description and collaboration plan, submitted from different organizations. In such cases, each organization in the collaboration has its own PI. For proposals submitted to this program that are chosen for funding directly by the NIH, the resubmission to NIH will be subject to NIH rules; that is, a single proposal with multiple principal investigators will be required.

10. **Do we need to address the protection of human subjects within the NSF 15-page Project Description limit?**

Yes, but this does not require an extensively detailed explanation, as you will be submitting an additional document detailing human subjects issues (see below). If you already have Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, you must specify that on the NSF Cover Sheet. Please see the NSF *Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide*, Chapter II.D.5 (PAPPG; https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg) for details.

In addition to the explanation included in the project description, proposals involving human subjects should include a supplementary document of no more than two pages in length, summarizing potential risks to human subjects, plans for recruitment and informed consent, inclusion of women, minorities, and children and planned procedures to protect against or minimize potential risks.

11. **Will there be jointly funded proposals by NSF and NIH?**

There is a potential for jointly funded proposals, as well as proposals solely funded by either NSF or NIH. If NIH opts to fully fund a proposal, the process will involve submission of the proposal to NIH (sending a paper copy of the NSF submission with a cover letter) for fast-tracked funding, along with withdrawal of the proposal from NSF consideration.

12. **What about the NIH Institutes/Centers that are not represented in the solicitation?**

Only those NIH Institutes/Centers listed are participating in this solicitation. If you are interested in submitting a proposal that meets criteria in the solicitation, and you believe it would be of interest to an Institute/Center not listed on the solicitation, the proposal should be submitted through standard NIH mechanisms including contacting the appropriate program officer. If you do not know who is the cognizant NIH program officer, send Wendy Nilsen (wnilsen@nsf.gov) a message describing your project and she will connect you with someone at the appropriate NIH Institute/Center.

13. **Is there a way for for-profit companies to participate in this solicitation?**

For-profit companies may not directly submit to the SCH solicitation. The SCH program, however, allows academic or non-profit organizations to include a subaward for a portion of the work to a for-profit entity, with justification.

14. **How much money can I request in my proposed budget?**

The total budget may be up to $300,000 per year (including indirect costs) for up to four years.