

## Enabling Discovery through GENomic Tools (EDGE)

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### PROGRAM SOLICITATION

NSF 18-506



National Science Foundation

Directorate for Biological Sciences  
Division of Integrative Organismal Systems

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

February 01, 2018

February 07, 2019

First Thursday in February, Annually Thereafter

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND REVISION NOTES

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The Enabling Discovery through GENomic Tools (EDGE) track was previously a component of the Division of Integrative Organismal Systems (IOS) Core Programs solicitation ([NSF 16-505](#)).

Submission of letters of intent or preliminary proposals is not required. Only full proposals should be submitted in response to this solicitation.

There is no annual limit to the number of proposals submitted per PI or co-PI in response to this solicitation.

Biographical sketches submitted with full proposals in response to this solicitation must now conform to the Biosketch guidelines of the NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG).

Any proposal submitted in response to this solicitation should be submitted in accordance with the revised *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) ([NSF 18-1](#)), which is effective for proposals submitted, or due, on or after January 29, 2018.

### SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

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#### General Information

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**Program Title:**

Enabling Discovery through GENomic Tools (EDGE)

**Synopsis of Program:**

The Division of Integrative Organismal Systems (IOS) continues to support the Enabling Discovery through GENomic Tools (EDGE) program, previously a component of the IOS Core Programs solicitation ([NSF 18-1](#)). EDGE is designed to provide support for research addressing current impediments to research progress in organismal biology. In particular, the ability to directly test gene function is essential to improve understanding of the genomes-to-phenomes relationship, an area relevant to Understanding the Rules of Life, one of 10 Big Ideas for future NSF investment ([https://www.nsf.gov/about/congress/reports/nsf\\_big\\_ideas.pdf](https://www.nsf.gov/about/congress/reports/nsf_big_ideas.pdf)). EDGE projects should focus on development of functional genomic tools, approaches, and associated infrastructure to enable direct tests of hypotheses about gene function in diverse organisms for which such tools and infrastructure are presently unavailable.

EDGE proposals must include training and rapid dissemination plans enabling larger communities of investigators to utilize the newly-developed tools, thereby catalyzing an increase in the capacity of research communities to test cause-and-effect hypotheses about genes and phenotypes in organisms for which such tools and infrastructure are presently lacking.

**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.

- Michelle Elekonich, telephone: (703) 292-7202, email: [melekoni@nsf.gov](mailto:melekoni@nsf.gov)

- Diane Jofuku Okamuro, telephone: (703) 292-4508, email: [dokamuro@nsf.gov](mailto:dokamuro@nsf.gov)
- Edda (Floh) Thiels, telephone: (703) 292-8421, email: [ethiels@nsf.gov](mailto:ethiels@nsf.gov)
- Theodore Morgan, telephone: (703) 292-7868, email: [tmorgan@nsf.gov](mailto:tmorgan@nsf.gov)
- Paul A. Krieg, telephone: (703) 292-7879, email: [pkrieg@nsf.gov](mailto:pkrieg@nsf.gov)

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

- 47.074 --- Biological Sciences

## Award Information

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**Anticipated Type of Award:** Standard Grant or Continuing Grant

**Estimated Number of Awards:** 10

Approximately 10 awards per year, pending availability of funds

**Anticipated Funding Amount:** \$6,000,000

\$6,000,000 in FY18. The estimated budget, number of awards, and average award size/duration are subject to the availability of funds.

**Limitation of Awards**

EDGE proposal budget requests may be for up to \$2M to support up to a three-year project plan.

## Eligibility Information

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**Who May Submit Proposals:**

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) - Two- and four-year IHEs (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in the US, acting on behalf of their faculty members. Special Instructions for International Branch Campuses of US IHEs: If the proposal includes funding to be provided to an international branch campus of a US institution of higher education (including through use of subawards and consultant arrangements), the proposer must explain the benefit(s) to the project of performance at the international branch campus, and justify why the project activities cannot be performed at the US campus.
- Non-profit, non-academic organizations: Independent museums, observatories, research labs, professional societies and similar organizations in the U.S. associated with educational or research activities.

**Who May Serve as PI:**

There are no restrictions or limits.

**Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:**

There are no restrictions or limits.

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

There are no restrictions or limits.

## Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions

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**A. Proposal Preparation Instructions**

- **Letters of Intent:** Not required
- **Preliminary Proposal Submission:** Not required
- **Full Proposals:**
  - Full Proposals submitted via FastLane: *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) guidelines apply. The complete text of the PAPPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).
  - Full Proposals submitted via Grants.gov: *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov* guidelines apply (Note: The *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide* is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=grantsgovguide](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide)).

**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):

February 01, 2018

February 07, 2019

First Thursday in February, Annually Thereafter

## Proposal Review Information Criteria

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**Merit Review Criteria:**

National Science Board approved criteria. Additional merit review considerations apply. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.

## Award Administration Information

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**Award Conditions:**

Standard NSF award conditions apply.

**Reporting Requirements:**

Standard NSF reporting requirements apply.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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The Division of Integrative Organismal Systems (IOS) supports research aimed at improving our understanding of organisms as

integrated units of biological organization. IOS welcomes diverse approaches to research addressing organismal questions, and especially encourages integrative and interdisciplinary perspectives on complex problems in organismal biology. The goal is to understand and predict why organisms are structured the way they are and function as they do.

IOS recognizes that a lack of functional genomic tools, approaches, and associated infrastructure remains a significant impediment to our understanding of the relationship between genomes and phenomes, a grand challenge in biology that is relevant to Understanding the Rules of Life, one of 10 Big Ideas for future NSF investment ([https://www.nsf.gov/about/congress/reports/nsf\\_big\\_ideas.pdf](https://www.nsf.gov/about/congress/reports/nsf_big_ideas.pdf)). Enabling Discovery through Genomic Tools (EDGE) will provide support to overcome these obstacles. EDGE projects should focus on development of functional genomic tools, approaches, and associated infrastructure to enable direct tests of gene function in diverse organisms presently lacking such tools. EDGE proposals must additionally include training and rapid dissemination plans enabling larger communities of investigators to utilize the newly-developed tools as soon as possible, thereby catalyzing an increase in the capacity of research communities to test cause-and-effect hypotheses about genes and phenotypes in these organisms.

## II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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Support for research on diverse organisms is essential to developing strong inferences about the principles or rules governing the mechanisms of interaction between genomes and phenomes. Researchers are using a wide array of organisms possessing unique features that make them especially well-suited to address fundamental questions in organismal biology. Although lower costs now make it possible to obtain genome and transcriptome sequences, researchers frequently are blocked from testing hypotheses about cause-and-effect mechanisms because they lack tools to test hypotheses about gene function. Consequently, investigations often come to a standstill at the stage of correlation (e.g., transcriptomic studies in which gene expression is correlated with experimental and/or environmental conditions), rather than proceeding to tests of causal relationships between genes, genomes, and phenotypes. Establishing such causal relationships is essential to accelerating advances in knowledge about the structure and function of organisms, particularly in understanding the relationship between genomes and phenomes, and discovering the Rules of Life.

To address these current research impediments, EDGE will support projects from individual investigators, small groups of collaborators, or larger collaborative teams who propose to develop functional genomic tools and infrastructure to enable direct tests of hypotheses about gene function in diverse organisms for which such tools and infrastructure are presently lacking. EDGE-supported investigators are expected to rapidly disseminate their tools and train other researchers in use of the tools, thereby catalyzing a broad-scale improvement in the community's capacity to conduct direct tests of mechanistic hypotheses about gene function. Examples of relevant tools, approaches, and infrastructure include, but are not limited to:

- Innovative approaches for establishing gene function: Development and testing of transformation approaches;
- Expansion of the use of gene editing, knock-out, and over-expression approaches in diverse organisms;
- Development of approaches to test gene function in a variety of targeted, single cells in organisms; and
- Development of approaches and establishment of conditions for routinely maintaining organisms and/or obtaining biological material to test gene function efficiently.

PIs may use taxonomic, question-based, and/or technology-based strategies to develop tools and approaches that will be employed by larger communities of researchers. Projects may include instrumentation development in the context of developing functional genomic tools to enable direct tests of gene function in organisms for which such tools and infrastructure are presently lacking; however, projects should not be limited exclusively to instrumentation development. Tools, approaches, and infrastructure that will have significant catalytic effect in enabling large numbers of PIs to overcome bottlenecks in testing gene function will receive priority. EDGE proposals must include training and rapid dissemination plans, as well as a rationale for support that is based on an assessment of current impediments and the potential impact of proposed projects on the relevant research communities. PIs are encouraged to bring together novel combinations of expertise to achieve the greatest impact of the proposed tools and infrastructure.

Highly competitive EDGE proposals will present a compelling case for the potential of the project to enable direct tests of hypotheses about gene function in organism(s) that are most likely to accelerate advances in organismal biology, and will include carefully developed plans to disseminate those new resources and train other researchers in their use. Descriptions of IOS programs in organismal biology may be found through links on the following website: <https://www.nsf.gov/funding/programs.jsp?org=IOS>.

Based on the first EDGE competition, IOS recognizes two specific impediments that, despite preliminary efforts to overcome them, still prevent researchers from achieving one or more goals of EDGE. These specific impediments are 1) achieving proof-of-principle, efficient transformation; and 2) obtaining, on demand, sufficient biological material (specific cell types, life history stages including adults, etc.) to conduct direct tests of gene function efficiently (see bulleted list above). Therefore, IOS encourages researchers to consider submitting **smaller-scope proposals focused exclusively on overcoming one of these bottlenecks**. For proposals aimed at obtaining sufficient biological material to conduct tests of gene function, preliminary data and/or citation of relevant literature demonstrating that proof-of-principle tests of gene function have already been achieved in the focal organism must be included.

EDGE is **not** intended to provide support for projects aimed at developing a wide array of tools and resources as a way to establish new canonical model organisms, i.e., in addition to *Mus*, *Caenorhabditis*, *Arabidopsis*, etc. Instead, EDGE is intended to provide more targeted support, specifically for the enablement of tests of gene function in diverse organisms in which such tests cannot be conducted presently.

Proposals that seek support exclusively for genome sequencing, or bioinformatics tool and pipeline development *are not appropriate for EDGE and may be returned without review*. Likewise, projects that focus exclusively on in silico approaches to infer gene function, i.e., generating hypotheses about gene function without direct tests of those hypotheses, *are not appropriate for EDGE and may be returned without review*.

Finally, hypothesis-driven research beyond proof-of-concept validation of EDGE-relevant tools and resources *is not appropriate for EDGE*. EDGE proposals should include only aims that are relevant to developing tools, approaches, and infrastructure needed to enable direct tests of hypotheses about gene function. EDGE is intended solely for tool development as described above, and EDGE support is not intended to substitute for support from other programs. Other research aims, which are relevant to the ongoing research programs of investigators involved with EDGE proposals, should be included in proposals submitted to other funding opportunities.

Consistent with the overarching goal of rapid development and dissemination of functional genomic tools for use in diverse organisms, EDGE budget requests up to \$2,000,000 over a project period of up to three years will be considered.

## REVIEW PROCESS

For this solicitation, EDGE proposals do not require submission of a letter of intent or preliminary proposals. Additional merit review considerations and special review criteria can be found in section VI of this solicitation.

*Special Information for:*

Research in Undergraduate Institution (RUI) Proposals

EDGE will accept Research in Undergraduate Institution (RUI) proposals. Proposals must be received by the deadline listed in this solicitation. Information on the scope of RUI projects and the format of these proposals can be found at [https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=5518](https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5518).

## III. AWARD INFORMATION

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**Anticipated Type of Award:** Continuing Grant or Standard Grant.

**Estimated Number of Awards:** Approximately 10 awards per year, pending availability of funds.

**Anticipated Funding Amount:** \$6,000,000 in FY18. The estimated budget, number of awards, and average award size/duration are subject to the availability of funds.

**Limitation of Awards:** EDGE proposal budget requests may be for up to \$2M to support up to a three-year project plan.

## IV. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

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### Who May Submit Proposals:

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) - Two- and four-year IHEs (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in the US, acting on behalf of their faculty members. Special Instructions for International Branch Campuses of US IHEs: If the proposal includes funding to be provided to an international branch campus of a US institution of higher education (including through use of subawards and consultant arrangements), the proposer must explain the benefit(s) to the project of performance at the international branch campus, and justify why the project activities cannot be performed at the US campus.
- Non-profit, non-academic organizations: Independent museums, observatories, research labs, professional societies and similar organizations in the U.S. associated with educational or research activities.

### Who May Serve as PI:

There are no restrictions or limits.

### Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:

There are no restrictions or limits.

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

There are no restrictions or limits.

### Additional Eligibility Info:

A consortium of organizations must submit a single proposal with one eligible organization serving as the lead and all other organizations as subawardees. Separately submitted collaborative proposals will be returned without review. International subawards are permitted if justified by unique opportunities and capabilities not available in the U.S.

## V. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

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### A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

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**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 Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG). The complete text of the PAPPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg). Paper copies of the PAPPG may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-7827 or by e-mail from [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto: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: ([https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=grantsgovguide](https://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](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov).

See PAPPG Chapter II.C.2 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 PAPPG instructions.

### EDGE SPECIFIC PROPOSAL PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS

The following **solicitation-specific exceptions and additions** to the PAPPG and NSF Grants.gov Application Guide guidelines apply to proposals submitted to this solicitation:

**Collaborative Proposals:** When a consortium of eligible organizations submits a proposal, it must be submitted as a single proposal with one organization serving as the lead and all other organizations as subawardees. Separately submitted collaborative proposals will be returned without review.

**Title of Proposed Project.** The project title must start with "EDGE: ...".

**Project Description,** not to exceed 15 pages. **Project plans must span three years or less.** PIs should note the additional review criteria for EDGE proposals contained in this solicitation (see **Additional Solicitation Specific Review Criteria**) as they develop their proposals. **The Project Description must contain, but is not limited to, the following four named sub-sections in any order:**

- **Intellectual Merit.** This named sub-section of the Project Description is required in all proposals submitted to NSF.
- **Challenges to enabling diverse organisms and community impact.** This section should include, but is not limited to: scientific and community-based justification of the selection of organism(s) that will be enabled; justification for work on multiple organisms; clear statements identifying bottlenecks to functional genomics questions linking cause and effect in these organisms, and how the bottlenecks will be addressed in the project; a description of how one or more research communities will benefit from the proposed project; a description of how scientific progress will be accelerated in one or more research areas if the proposed project is successful; a description of scientific gaps or specific scientific questions that could be addressed if the focal organism were enabled; and a description of any impediments the communities may face in employing the proposed tools. PIs may wish to frame their proposed development of tools, approaches, and infrastructure in the context of existing technologies, whether the proposed tools are novel or are an application of existing tools to the focal organism.
- **Experimental Approach.** This section should include, but is not limited to, a description of the proposed work, including goals, strategies, approaches, and methods. Highly competitive EDGE proposals include, for example, positive and negative controls, relevant repeatability metrics, and transformation efficiencies. Include only aims that are relevant to the goals of EDGE. Hypothesis-driven research beyond proof-of-concept validation of EDGE-relevant tools and resources is more appropriate for submission to other BIO programs.
- **Broader Impacts.** This named sub-section of the Project Description is required in all proposals submitted to NSF.

**EDGE proposals that do not include the four named sub-sections in the Project Description will be returned without review.**

**Proposal Budget.** Provide a summary budget and a yearly budget for the duration of the proposed project, including subawards, if appropriate. A Budget Justification should be provided for each budget submitted, including any subaward budgets. It is recommended that the Budget Justifications be structured with the same headings and subheadings shown in the Budget sheets. Funds for facility support, construction, or renovation may not be requested. Funds to cover the cost of attendance of the PI and one other member of the project senior personnel, or one trainee (graduate student or postdoc) at a two-day awardee meeting to be held in Alexandria, VA must be included in the budget for years 2 and 3.

### ADDITIONAL REQUIRED INFORMATION

#### SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS

- **Project Management Plan.** For those projects that involve one or more organizations as subawardees of the lead organization, a Project Management Plan, not to exceed 3 pages, must be included as a **Supplementary Document**. The plan should include a description of communication and coordination mechanisms that will insure the project goals are met in a timely manner. This document is separate from the Data Management Plan that is required in all NSF proposals (see the PAPPG). **Proposals that involve one or more organizations as subawardees, and that do not include the required Project Management Plan will be returned without review.**
- **Dissemination and Education Plan.** A Dissemination and Education Plan, not to exceed 3 pages, must be included as a **Supplementary Document**. The Dissemination and Education Plan should include, but is not limited to, a description of how the enabling tools will be **rapidly disseminated** and how training will be provided (if necessary) to maximize impact on the research community. An explicit expectation is that tools and methods will be disseminated before publication; PIs should

include plans to accommodate this expectation. How will outreach to the community be achieved? How many researchers will be trained? How will reagents and other resources be maintained and disseminated? An implementation timetable and strategy for evaluation and management of the Dissemination and Education Plan over the award period (three years or less) should be included. **Proposals that do not include the required Dissemination and Education Plan will be returned without review.**

- **Letters of Collaboration. Supplementary Documents** may include letters of collaboration from individuals or organizations that are integral parts of the proposed project but are not supported by subawards. Such individuals or organizations may be involved in specific, well-defined aspects of the project, cooperation on outreach efforts, or documentation of permission to access materials or data. Letters of collaboration should focus solely on affirming that the individual or organization is willing to collaborate on the project as specified in the Project Description. The Project Description should include a description of the nature of and need for the collaboration, the role of the collaborator, and the expected outcomes/deliverables from the collaboration. Letters of collaboration are not required from any individual designated as a Co-PI or senior personnel, nor are letters of collaboration required from any organization that will be a subawardee in the proposal budget.

Requests to collaborators for letters of collaboration should be made by the PI well in advance of the proposal submission deadline because they must be included at the time of proposal submission. **The template that must be used for the preparation of letters of collaboration is specified in the PAPPG, Chapter II,C.2.j. No additional text may be included in the letter. Proposals containing letters deviating from this template will be returned without review.**

**Please note that generic letters of general support are not allowed.**

## PRE-SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

Prior to submission, please review your proposal against this checklist to ensure that it is fully compliant with the guidelines provided in this solicitation:

- The **EDGE program solicitation number** has been included in the program solicitation block on the **NSF Cover Sheet**, and the **title** of the proposal begins with "EDGE:...".
- The **intellectual merit** and **broader impacts** of the proposed research are addressed in the **Project Summary**.
- The **Project Description** must contain, as a separate section within the narrative, a section labeled "Intellectual Merit" to address the intellectual merit of the proposed work, and addresses broader impacts in a separate section in the narrative labeled "Broader Impacts". The **Project Description** also includes additional separate sections labeled "Challenges to enabling diverse organisms and community impact," and "Experimental approach".
- The **Biographical Sketches** conform to the guidance in the PAPPG.
- **Planned REU, ROA, RET, and RAHSS** activities are included in the budget request; funds to cover the cost of attendance of the PI and one other member of the project senior personnel, or one trainee (graduate student or postdoc) at an **awardee meeting** to be held in Alexandria, VA are included in the budget for years 2 and 3.
- The **Data Management Plan, Dissemination and Education Plan**, and, where applicable, **Project Management Plan, Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan, RUI Impact Statement and RUI Certification**, and/or **REU Supplement Request** have been uploaded into **Supplemental Documents**.
- **Letters of Collaboration** (where applicable) conform to the mandated template, and are uploaded into **Supplementary Documents**.
- A **Collaborators and Other Affiliations Information** document, prepared according to the instructions in the PAPPG is included as a **Single Copy Document**.

## B. Budgetary Information

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### Cost Sharing:

Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.

### Other Budgetary Limitations:

EDGE proposal budget requests may be for up to \$2M to support up to a three-year project plan.

## C. Due Dates

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

February 01, 2018

February 07, 2019

First Thursday in February, Annually Thereafter

## D. FastLane/Grants.gov Requirements

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### 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](mailto: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 registered, the applicant's organization can then apply for any federal grant on the Grants.gov website. Comprehensive information about using Grants.gov is available on the Grants.gov Applicant Resources web page: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants.html>. In addition, the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide (see link in Section V.A) provides instructions regarding the technical preparation of proposals via Grants.gov. For Grants.gov user support, contact the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or by email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The Grants.gov Contact Center answers general technical questions related to the use of Grants.gov. Specific questions related to this program solicitation should be referred to the NSF program staff contact(s) listed in Section VIII of this solicitation.

**Submitting the Proposal:** Once all documents have been completed, the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) must submit the application to Grants.gov and verify the desired funding opportunity and agency to which the application is submitted. The AOR must then sign and submit the application to Grants.gov. The completed application will be transferred to the NSF FastLane system for further processing.

Proposers that submitted via FastLane are strongly encouraged to use FastLane to verify the status of their submission to NSF. For proposers that submitted via Grants.gov, until an application has been received and validated by NSF, the Authorized Organizational Representative may check the status of an application on Grants.gov. After proposers have received an e-mail notification from NSF, Research.gov should be used to check the status of an application.

## VI. NSF PROPOSAL PROCESSING AND REVIEW PROCEDURES

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Proposals received by NSF are assigned to the appropriate NSF program for acknowledgement and, if they meet NSF requirements, for review. All proposals are carefully reviewed by a scientist, engineer, or educator serving as an NSF Program Officer, and usually by three to ten other persons outside NSF either as *ad hoc* reviewers, panelists, or both, who are experts in the particular fields represented by the proposal. These reviewers are selected by Program Officers charged with oversight of the review process. Proposers are invited to suggest names of persons they believe are especially well qualified to review the proposal and/or persons they would prefer not review the proposal. These suggestions may serve as one source in the reviewer selection process at the Program Officer's discretion. Submission of such names, however, is optional. Care is taken to ensure that reviewers have no conflicts of interest with the proposal. In addition, Program Officers may obtain comments from site visits before recommending final action on proposals. Senior NSF staff further review recommendations for awards. A flowchart that depicts the entire NSF proposal and award process (and associated timeline) is included in PAPPG Exhibit III-1.

A comprehensive description of the Foundation's merit review process is available on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit\\_review/](https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/).

Proposers should also be aware of core strategies that are essential to the fulfillment of NSF's mission, as articulated in *Building the Future: Investing in Discovery and Innovation - NSF Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2018 - 2022*. These strategies are integrated in the program planning and implementation process, of which proposal review is one part. NSF's mission is particularly well-implemented through the integration of research and education and broadening participation in NSF programs, projects, and activities.

One of the strategic objectives in support of NSF's mission is to foster integration of research and education through the programs, projects, and activities it supports at academic and research institutions. These institutions must recruit, train, and prepare a diverse STEM workforce to advance the frontiers of science and participate in the U.S. technology-based economy. NSF's contribution to the national innovation ecosystem is to provide cutting-edge research under the guidance of the Nation's most creative scientists and engineers. NSF also supports development of a strong science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce by investing in building the knowledge that informs improvements in STEM teaching and learning.

NSF's mission calls for the broadening of opportunities and expanding participation of groups, institutions, and geographic regions that are underrepresented in STEM disciplines, which is essential to the health and vitality of science and engineering. NSF is committed to this principle of diversity and deems it central to the programs, projects, and activities it considers and supports.

### A. Merit Review Principles and Criteria

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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. (PAPPG 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 PAPPG 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.

### Additional Solicitation Specific Review Criteria

For **EDGE proposals**, it is suggested that reviewers focus on the following critical aspects of the proposed work:

- The potential catalytic impact on advancing research and on associated research communities of enabling the organisms named in the proposal;
- The potential catalytic impact on advancing research and on associated research communities of the enabling tools, approaches, and infrastructure that are proposed;
- The feasibility of the proposed methods and approaches to achieve the stated goals, and likelihood of success;
- The quality and potential for high impact of the Dissemination and Education Plan; and
- For those proposals involving multiple organizations, the quality of the Project Management Plan and likelihood of successful project coordination.

## B. Review and Selection Process

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Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation will be reviewed by Ad hoc Review and/or 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.

## VII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

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### A. Notification of the Award

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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

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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 [https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/award\\_conditions.jsp?org=NSF](https://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 [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov).

More comprehensive information on NSF Award Conditions and other important information on the administration of NSF awards is contained in the NSF *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) Chapter VII, available electronically on the NSF Website at [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).

### C. Reporting Requirements

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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.

More comprehensive information on NSF Reporting Requirements and other important information on the administration of NSF awards is contained in the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) Chapter VII, available electronically on the NSF Website at [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=papppg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=papppg).

## VIII. AGENCY CONTACTS

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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:

- Michelle Elekonich, telephone: (703) 292-7202, email: [melekoni@nsf.gov](mailto:melekoni@nsf.gov)
- Diane Jofuku Okamuro, telephone: (703) 292-4508, email: [dokamuro@nsf.gov](mailto:dokamuro@nsf.gov)
- Edda (Floh) Thiels, telephone: (703) 292-8421, email: [ethiels@nsf.gov](mailto:ethiels@nsf.gov)
- Theodore Morgan, telephone: (703) 292-7868, email: [tmorgan@nsf.gov](mailto:tmorgan@nsf.gov)
- Paul A. Krieg, telephone: (703) 292-7879, email: [pkrieg@nsf.gov](mailto:pkrieg@nsf.gov)

For questions related to the use of FastLane, contact:

- FastLane Help Desk, telephone: 1-800-673-6188; e-mail: [fastlane@nsf.gov](mailto:fastlane@nsf.gov).

For questions relating to Grants.gov contact:

- Grants.gov Contact Center: If the Authorized Organizational Representatives (AOR) has not received a confirmation message from Grants.gov within 48 hours of submission of application, please contact via telephone: 1-800-518-4726; e-mail: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).

See the EDGE FAQ [NSF 18-025](#) for more information.

**General inquiries regarding this program should be made to:** [bioiosedge@nsf.gov](mailto:bioiosedge@nsf.gov)

## IX. OTHER INFORMATION

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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>.

## ABOUT THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

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The National Science Foundation (NSF) is an independent Federal agency created by the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended (42 USC 1861-75). The Act states the purpose of the NSF is "to promote the progress of science; [and] to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare by supporting research and education in all fields of science and engineering."

NSF funds research and education in most fields of science and engineering. It does this through grants and cooperative agreements to more than 2,000 colleges, universities, K-12 school systems, businesses, informal science organizations and other research organizations throughout the US. The Foundation accounts for about one-fourth of Federal support to academic institutions for basic research.

NSF receives approximately 55,000 proposals each year for research, education and training projects, of which approximately 11,000 are funded. In addition, the Foundation receives several thousand applications for graduate and postdoctoral fellowships. The agency operates no laboratories itself but does support National Research Centers, user facilities, certain oceanographic vessels and Arctic and Antarctic research stations. The Foundation also supports cooperative research between universities and industry, US participation in international scientific and engineering efforts, and educational activities at every academic level.

*Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities* (FASSED) provide funding for special assistance or equipment to enable persons with disabilities to work on NSF-supported projects. See the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* Chapter II.E.6 for instructions regarding preparation of these types of proposals.

The National Science Foundation has Telephonic Device for the Deaf (TDD) and Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) capabilities that enable individuals with hearing impairments to communicate with the Foundation about NSF programs, employment or general

information. TDD may be accessed at (703) 292-5090 and (800) 281-8749, FIRS at (800) 877-8339.

The National Science Foundation Information Center may be reached at (703) 292-5111.

The National Science Foundation promotes and advances scientific progress in the United States by competitively awarding grants and cooperative agreements for research and education in the sciences, mathematics, and engineering.

To get the latest information about program deadlines, to download copies of NSF publications, and to access abstracts of awards, visit the NSF Website at <https://www.nsf.gov>

- **Location:** 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22314
- **For General Information** (NSF Information Center): (703) 292-5111
- **TDD (for the hearing-impaired):** (703) 292-5090
- **To Order Publications or Forms:**
  - Send an e-mail to: [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov)
  - or telephone: (703) 292-7827
- **To Locate NSF Employees:** (703) 292-5111

## PRIVACY ACT AND PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENTS

The information requested on proposal forms and project reports is solicited under the authority of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended. The information on proposal forms will be used in connection with the selection of qualified proposals; and project reports submitted by awardees will be used for program evaluation and reporting within the Executive Branch and to Congress. The information requested may be disclosed to qualified reviewers and staff assistants as part of the proposal review process; to proposer institutions/grantees to provide or obtain data regarding the proposal review process, award decisions, or the administration of awards; to government contractors, experts, volunteers and researchers and educators as necessary to complete assigned work; to other government agencies or other entities needing information regarding applicants or nominees as part of a joint application review process, or in order to coordinate programs or policy; and to another Federal agency, court, or party in a court or Federal administrative proceeding if the government is a party. Information about Principal Investigators may be added to the Reviewer file and used to select potential candidates to serve as peer reviewers or advisory committee members. See Systems of Records, [NSF-50](#), "Principal Investigator/Proposal File and Associated Records," 69 Federal Register 26410 (May 12, 2004), and [NSF-51](#), "Reviewer/Proposal File and Associated Records," 69 Federal Register 26410 (May 12, 2004). Submission of the information is voluntary. Failure to provide full and complete information, however, may reduce the possibility of receiving an award.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, an information collection unless it displays a valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. The OMB control number for this collection is 3145-0058. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 120 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions. Send comments regarding the burden estimate and any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to:

Suzanne H. Plimpton  
Reports Clearance Officer  
Office of the General Counsel  
National Science Foundation  
Alexandria, VA 22314

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