



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 19-034

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for NSF 19-501, Accelerating Research through International Network-to-Network Collaborations (AccelNet) Program

1. How does NSF define "network" and "network of networks" for the purposes of the AccelNet program?
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 16. How does the Personnel and Partner Organization document differ from the Collaborators and Other Affiliations Information, and are both documents necessary?
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1. How does NSF define "network" and "network of networks" for the purposes of the AccelNet program?

In this solicitation, a network is considered to be an established, coordinated, distributed group of scientific researchers who cooperate within or across fields to collect and share resources, knowledge, and expertise.

A network of networks is a link among networks which serves to amplify and leverage connections across the linked networks. The properties of networks include multi-institutional collaborations involving diverse teams of investigators focused on community-identified questions or needs. Thus, the envisioned networks of networks should go beyond existing or emerging concentrations of expertise and should strengthen community linkages across boundaries.

2. Who is the intended target of activities to develop student professional skills and global research perspectives?

AccelNet professional development activities support development of a globally engaged U.S. science and engineering workforce. Active inclusion of students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents is a priority, but AccelNet recognizes that other students at U.S. institutions also actively contribute to the U.S. research community. Consistent with the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG), students and early career researchers at U.S. institutions of higher education may be included in the AccelNet-funded activities when doing so advances the research and professional development objectives of the project.

3. How would a potential international network of networks differ from other NSF network opportunities?

The AccelNet program has key differences from past and current funding opportunities involving networks (such as Research Coordination Networks (RCNs)), including:

- Focus on networks of networks, not individual networks;

- International collaboration is integral and required;
- Goals of the program are to (1) accelerate scientific discoveries, and (2) prepare students at U.S. institutions of higher education, postdoctoral scholars, and early career researchers for success in conducting and leading multi-team international collaborations; and
- Protocols for communication, data management, intellectual property, shared-use infrastructure, and other network activities, facilities, or products are intended to reduce the barriers to international collaboration.

4. Is the competition open to all research areas?

Yes. Proposals will be accepted in any field or combination of fields of science, engineering, or education research supported by NSF, or convergent fields that cut across NSF-supported disciplines. However, submitted proposals must focus on research challenges that align with either one of the NSF Big Ideas or a community identified scientific challenge.

For reference to the NSF Big Ideas, see the NSF Website: [NSF 10 Big Ideas](#). Proposals in community identified grand challenge areas should include references that support identification of scientific or engineering challenges.

5. Is there additional funding available for proposals aligned to the NSF Big Ideas?

No. Within the requirement to focus on NSF Big Ideas or community identified scientific challenges, all proposals will be treated equally. Proposals will be recommended for funding based on quality alone, independent of proposal scientific challenge. There is no separate or additional budget for any subset of topic areas.

6. Will proposals that do not meet the eligibility requirements for submission and/or proposal preparation instructions be returned without review?

Yes. Proposals that do not comply with the solicitation will be returned without review. The eligibility requirements (Section IV of the solicitation) include who may submit proposals and limits the number of proposals per Principal Investigator (PI) or co-PI. A compliant Letter of Intent (LOI) must be submitted by the lead institution, and failure to submit an LOI will result in a full proposal being returned without review. Full proposals must include the materials and supplementary documents specified in the solicitation. Note that the Project Description requires particular information for Catalytic Projects and Full-Implementation Projects under specific required sections.

7. What features signal a project is appropriate for a project at the Catalytic or Full Implementation Level?

Review carefully the "**Full Proposal Preparation Instructions**" in the program

solicitation ([NSF 19-501](#)) which outline specific information that must be provided in your proposal for each level. If it would be very difficult or impossible to provide information requested for the Full-Scale Implementation proposals, that would be an indication that a Catalytic Proposal would be a better fit. For example, Full-Scale Implementation proposals must include a mapping of the fields of research on which the network of networks is focused and explain how the proposed network of networks relates to existing efforts and research frameworks. Proposals at the Full-Scale Implementation Level must demonstrate overarching alignment of goals among partners.

8. Is it necessary to successfully complete a Catalytic level project prior to submitting a proposal for a Full-Scale Implementation level project?

No. The two levels of projects are not intended to be a required progression. Consider carefully the level of maturity of the networks and their connections to determine whether a Catalytic or Full-Implementation Level Project is appropriate for your proposed project.

9. Can funds for travel of international partners be included in the budget?

Funds may be requested for foreign counterparts and foreign students to travel to network meetings held in the U.S. when their participation is integral to realizing the goals of the activity.

10. Can funds for research activities be included in the budget?

AccelNet is not intended to support the primary research expenses of the PI-teams, but proposals may request up to 5% of the total budget for exploratory, collaborative research between junior members of the teams (students, postdoctoral researchers, early-career researchers, etc.).

11. Can I fund a postdoctoral researcher on this grant?

Yes, funds may be requested for postdoctoral researcher salary for effort devoted to facilitating the network-to-network activities under the project.

12. Is the list of network of networks characteristics required for all proposals?

Yes, proposals are expected to describe how projects will have or develop all of the listed network of network characteristics.

13. Can AccelNet projects include undergraduate student, K-12 students and teachers in addition to graduate students?

Yes, if appropriate for the proposed project, and if the participation of these students

and teachers will contribute to the goals of the project.

14. Is Broadening Participation an aim of this program, and are proposals from Minority Serving Institutions welcome?

Most certainly. NSF values broadening participation in all proposals and project activities. Proposals are welcome from any institution that meets the eligibility criteria stated in the solicitation, including Minority Serving Institutions.

15. Will off-campus indirect cost rates be applicable to AccelNet grants?

This is for the submitting institution to determine, consistent with its negotiated indirect cost rate agreement.

16. How does the Personnel and Partner Organization document differ from the Collaborators and Other Affiliations Information, and are both documents necessary?

Both lists are necessary because they are used for different purposes. The Collaborators and Other Affiliations (COA) Information is required of all NSF proposals and is used by NSF during the merit review process to help manage reviewer selection. The Collaborators and Other Affiliations are entered for each participant within each proposal and, as Single Copy Documents, are available only to NSF staff. See Chapter II.C.1.e of the NSF PAPPG for guidance.

The Personnel and Partner Organization document should be uploaded as a "Supplementary Document." The purpose of this Supplementary Document is to provide NSF and reviewers with a comprehensive list of the personnel and organizations involved in the key components of the network of networks. The list should include only those individuals with critical responsibilities in the activities necessary to meet the project goals. See Section V of the solicitation for additional information.

17. How will AccelNet proposals be reviewed — in disciplinary or interdisciplinary panels?

It may be a mix, so PIs should write their proposals in a way that reviewers from outside of the PIs' immediate disciplinary fields can understand the main issues and contributions of the proposed project.

18. Where can additional information about the AccelNet program be found?

If you have other questions that are not answered in the program solicitation and these FAQs, please contact the AccelNet alias at oise-accelnet@nsf.gov.