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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the 2019 - 2020 ADVANCE Solicitation

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GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you mean by evidence-based strategies?

The strategies (or activities) that are proposed in the ADVANCE proposal must have some evidence of

effectiveness in addressing systemic inequities in academic workplaces and/or in the academic profession. Evidence may come from the relevant social or behavioral science research literature on diversity in the STEM workforce, equity in workplaces, organizational change, and organizational culture and climate. Evidence may also come from the lessons learned by others from the implementation of the strategy(ies). This could be from published papers and reports, evaluation reports, site visits, and/or discussions about the impacts with those who have implemented the strategy(ies).

2. Are all strategies (or activities) implemented by past grantees appropriate to adapt in a new ADVANCE proposal?

Not necessarily, for the following reasons: 1) Not everything that was implemented was successful at addressing systemic inequities, and without evidence of effectiveness it may not be appropriate to adapt, at least not without modifications informed by the research literature; 2) Prior strategies were primarily focused on gender equity so in order to be intersectional you may need to be adapt those strategies to the intersection of gender, race and ethnicity or other social identities in STEM academics; 3) Some strategies may no longer be relevant or necessary because issues have changed or the strategies have become common operating practices within similar organizations; and 4) Many strategies that have been implemented by past ADVANCE grantees were designed to address the impact of systemic inequity(ies) on individuals (the symptoms) and these should not be adapted without also proposing other strategies designed to address the underlying systemic issues. In your proposal you need to communicate that you understand the difference between the symptoms and the underlying systemic issues and ensure that you are proposing at least some systemic change strategies.

3. What do you mean by "adaptation" in the ADVANCE solicitation — can't we just propose to do what others have already done?

You need to adapt those strategies to your context and the systemic inequities that you have. Your data collection and data analysis must be done before you identify potential strategies. For example, your analysis may indicate that your equity issues are with retention of faculty of color in STEM after the initial hiring and before tenure. Before adapting ADVANCE strategies focused on tenure, you first need to discover the underlying reasons for this problem at your organization(s) or in your discipline(s). For one organization the issues may be with the culture and climate in departments, for another it may be unclear, inconsistent, subjective criteria for tenure, for another the issue may be with service workload, access to resources such as research and teaching assistantships, and clerical support. Each reason would require very different strategies to resolve.

4. What do you mean by a symptom of systemic inequity?

Many strategies that have been implemented by past ADVANCE grantees were designed to address the individual impact(s) (symptoms) of systemic inequity(ies). Usually these strategies were implemented at the same time as other strategies designed to address the underlying systemic issues. In your proposal you need to communicate that you understand the difference between the symptoms and the underlying systemic inequity(ies) and ensure that you are proposing overall systemic change strategies to address the inequities. You may propose to implement strategies that mitigate the individual impact(s) (symptoms) of systemic inequity(ies) at the same time, but proposals that focus solely on helping individuals survive in the system without also positively changing the system will not be competitive.

5. Do we have to use evidence-based practices from prior ADVANCE work only?

No. Strategies may include new strategies that are informed by other sources as well as the equity and organizational change research literature. However, projects are expected to be aware of prior ADVANCE work to avoid costly and time-consuming redevelopment of strategies, tools, materials, that others have developed and tested.

6. Where can I find more information on prior ADVANCE work?

Many past ADVANCE grantees have program websites with downloadable tools, materials and other resources that they have developed to address various systemic inequities. These websites can frequently be found by searching for ADVANCE and the name of the grantee institution. An updated list of past ADVANCE Institutional Transformation awardees can be found at <https://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/advance/awards.jsp>. Another potential source is the project [StratEGIC website](#) described as "This practical Toolkit distills and shares lessons learned about particular interventions and how they combine into an overall change portfolio. Organizations can strategically choose and combine interventions as they work to support the success of women scholars in STEM fields."

7. Are there any other resources or communities of practice on equity in STEM academics?

The ADVANCE Resource Coordination Network (ARC Network) <https://equityinstem.org/> is a new resource operated by the Association for Women in the Sciences (AWIS) that will focus on information curation and community engagement through virtual communities and convenings. The network launched in September 2018 and will be ramping up services and resources on the website over time. The community is open to anyone who wants to join; you do not need to have an ADVANCE grant or be a member of AWIS to participate.

8. Are there any resources to learn more about systemic inequities?

The social and behavioral science literature includes many research publications on inequity and equity in STEM education and the workplace and systemic barriers to inclusion and success of diverse individuals in STEM. Some websites that may be useful include: [Center for Gender Equity in Science and Technology](#), [The Gender Equity Project](#), [Gendered Innovations](#), [European Institute for Gender Equality](#), [StratEGIC website](#), [Tools for Change](#), [Worklife Law](#), [Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute](#), [African American Policy Forum](#).

9. Are there any resources to learn more about intersectionality?

The social and behavioral science literature includes many research publications on intersectionality. Some potential references are included at the end of this FAQ. Intersectionality refers to the cumulative way that different forms of social identities (which have associated advantages or disadvantages) combine, overlap, and interact to influence the experience of the individual in different settings, such as workplaces. All ADVANCE proposals are expected to take an intersectional perspective and consider the salient categories of social identity when appropriate. Specifically, proposers should recognize that gender, race and ethnicity do not exist in isolation from each other and other categories of social identity, such as disability status, sexual orientation, foreign-born and foreign-trained status, faculty appointment type, etc. ADVANCE proposals should offer strategies to promote equity for all faculty. Some websites that may be useful include: [Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies](#), [African American Policy Forum](#), [American Psychological Association Public Interest Directorate](#).

10. What is the difference between "organizational culture" and "organizational climate"?

The culture and climate of an organization are factors that can impact equity, retention, success, and inclusion. Organizational culture can be thought of as a system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, which govern how people behave in an organization. These shared values have a strong influence on people in the organization and can dictate how they behave and implement their jobs. Organizational climate comes from the aspects of the organization that are observed and perceived by people in the organization and thereby influence people's actions and job performance. These definitions are offered as one way to distinguish between organizational culture and organizational climate but there may be other appropriate definitions that may be applied and used for an ADVANCE proposal.

INNOVATION

11. What do you mean by "innovative systemic change strategies" in Institutional Transformation proposals?

With the IT track, the ADVANCE program is seeking to support innovative projects that need a longer and larger investment to develop, implement, and evaluate. IHEs interested in adapting existing strategies from others should submit an Adaptation proposal. It is possible that there are yet to be identified systemic equity issues or emerging issues within STEM academic organizations that need new and innovative strategies to address them. If you have identified systemic gender equity issues that cannot be addressed with systemic change strategies previously developed, then you will have to innovate to develop new strategies to address those systemic equity issues and should consider submitting an IT-Preliminary proposal. Submitting an IT-Preliminary proposal is the only way to be invited to submit a full IT proposal.

12. Would it be innovative to adapt systemic change strategies from a research institution to a community college or other different type of institution?

The ADVANCE program is very interested in supporting this work, but it should be done through the Adaptation or Catalyst tracks since it is not necessarily innovative to do this adaptation. It might be innovative if there are different or new systemic inequities that need to be addressed at non-research institutions and innovative new strategies need to be developed.

PROJECT SCOPE

13. What are the differences between the ADVANCE tracks?

NSF ADVANCE Track	Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)	Non-Academic Organizations	Prior NSF ADVANCE status	Multiple Organizations	Budget	Preliminary Proposal or Letter of Intent (LOI)
Institutional Transformation (IT)	Yes -(must include all STEM disciplines at the institution)	No	IHEs cannot have had an ADVANCE IT or Adaptation	Not permitted (systems & multi-campus IHEs are permitted)	Up to \$3M for five years	IT-Preliminary Proposal Required AND an invitation from NSF to

			award			submit IT proposal
Adaptation	Yes -(must include all STEM at the institution)	Yes -(one or more STEM discipline, National/regional reach)	IHEs cannot have had an ADVANCE IT or Adaptation award	Not permitted (systems & multi-campus IHEs are permitted)	Up to \$1M for 3 years + up to \$100K more for partnering w/ NSF STEM graduate ed. project	LOI Required
Partnership	Yes -(one or more STEM discipline, National/regional reach)	Yes -(one or more STEM discipline, National/regional reach)	May have, or have had, an ADVANCE grant but it is not required	Required -two or more in the partnership	Up to \$1M for 3 to 5 years + up to \$250K more for partnering with NSF INCLUDES National Network	LOI Required
Catalyst	Yes -(must include all STEM disciplines at the institution)	No	IHEs cannot have been the lead on any ADVANCE award	Not permitted (systems & multi-campus IHEs are permitted)	Up to \$300K for 2 years	None

14. Do Adaptation or Partnership projects have to address all gender, racial, and ethnic inequities for STEM faculty that have been identified in our analysis?

No. It may not be possible to address all the issues identified in your problem analysis given your context and/or the maximum length of ADVANCE projects and the budget amount. Projects may address one or more of the issues of systemic inequities that you have identified in your data collection and analysis. You should make the case in the project description for focusing on one or a subset of issues within the project over other issues. Noting that all ADVANCE proposals are still expected to incorporate intersectional approaches.

15. Does my proposal have to address all three ADVANCE objectives described in the Program Description section of the solicitation?

Not all three, but your project should be linked to one or more of these objectives and the link(s) should be made explicit in your proposal. The proposal should clearly identify the metrics that will be used to measure

progress toward the objective(s).

16. What do you mean by "regional" impact for Partnership projects?

Partnership projects are expected to have regional or national impact. The impact of your project should be clearly explained in your proposal. You should define the regional impact in your proposal. A "region" may be one or more states or territories, or a geographic area in a state (rural Arkansas) or in the country (the southeastern states). National impact means the project is designed to impact individuals and/or organizations throughout the country. The case should be made for the project's focus on the proposed region, individuals, and/or organizations. The degree of systemic change and equity enhancement that will result from the project should also be clear to the reader. A regionally focused Partnership project might propose to create a cadre of implicit bias experts specializing in providing training for leaders of two-year institutions in the southwest region of the country. Another Partnership project might propose to work with predominantly undergraduate institutions in one state to create equitable workplace policies for adjunct and part-time STEM faculty.

17. How could one ADVANCE project have "national" impact?

A Partnership project could have national impact by focusing on improvements in national level policies that impact higher education, for example, infusing an equity lens into accreditation or certification policies and processes. Another Partnership project could focus on one STEM discipline to clarify and expand discipline-wide expectations for academic excellence to mitigate differential recognition of service, teaching, and research. In an Adaptation proposal, a professional society may propose to incorporate training on equity issues during annual meetings of department chairs and provide coaching and technical assistance for those chairs who want to implement systemic changes.

18. What counts as "significant reach"?

You should make the case in your Partnership proposal or Adaptation proposal from a non-academic organization that the project will have a significant reach. This will be different depending on the systemic inequity issues that are being addressed, the population(s) targeted, and the proposed strategies. Describe the intended reach of the project in numbers and percentages as well as the impact of the project in terms of the expected systemic, cultural and/or climatic change. Depending on your project, the number and percent reached of a targeted population may be inversely proportional to the degree of systemic change that is expected by each participant. For example, a project that focuses on arts and science college deans could focus on reaching all deans in the country with training on how to implement accountability mechanisms in faculty searches, or a project could focus on a subset of deans with training and post-training technical assistance to implement a suite of several systemic change strategies within their college. Each has significant reach but in different ways. The first project has significant reach in terms of the percent of all deans participating but does not necessarily result in systemic change at IHEs, and the other reaches a limited percent of deans but has significant reach in terms of the systemic changes that will be implemented. The significance of the reach is also related to the numbers and percent of others indirectly reached by the effort (for example presidents, deans, and chairs indirectly influence the academic careers of hundreds of STEM faculty). Significance is also related to the impact of the resulting systemic and/or organizational cultural and climatic changes that are expected from the effort. For example, a project that will incorporate an equity lens into higher education accreditation policies may focus on one or two organizations but could have significant long-term impact on many institutions of higher education and potentially thousands of faculty. Note that the reach of Adaptation proposals from a single IHE is understood to be the systemic change across the institution that impacts all the STEM disciplines at the institution.

PARTNERSHIP

19. What kind of organizations can serve as partners?

Partnering organizations can include any non-profit institution of higher education (IHE) located in the U.S. and/or non-profit, non-academic organization eligible for NSF support. For example, non-profit, non-academic partners may include professional societies, STEM or higher education related organizations, publishers, and policy and research entities. Partners may include unfunded strategic partners such as industry partners or foundations. More information on who may submit proposals can be found in the NSF PAPPG [Chapter I.E. Categories of Proposers](#).

20. What are unfunded strategic partners?

Your project may include partners that do not receive funds from the NSF ADVANCE grant. Most likely these partners may be benefiting from the partnership in other ways such as access to a resource or toolkit or equity training or by providing perspectives to the project. Whether funded or unfunded, the partnerships in the project should be purposeful and necessary to implement the project and/or meet the project goals for the reach of the project to various STEM stakeholders. Please review the NSF PAPPG language on Unfunded Collaborations [II.C.2.d\(iv\)](#) regarding how to document such collaborations in the in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal ([Chapter II.C.2.i](#)) and the section on cost sharing ([II.C.2g\(xii\)](#)).

21. Are one or more partners in a Partnership proposal expected to have prior ADVANCE grant experience?

No. Previous or current funding from ADVANCE is not a prerequisite to be a partner or lead on a Partnership project. All the partnering organizations may be new to the ADVANCE program.

22. Can my IHE or organization be a partner on more than one Partnership proposal?

Yes. However, an IHE or organization can only be the lead on one Partnership proposal.

23. Can my IHE or organization submit any other ADVANCE proposal (Institutional Transformation, Adaptation or Catalyst) proposal and be a partner on more than one Partnership proposal?

Yes. However, any one IHE or organization can only be the lead on one Partnership proposal.

QUESTIONS ON THE COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITY DESCRIBED IN THE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION SECTION

24. How do I request the additional funds for partnering outside of the ADVANCE partners in my Adaptation or Partnership proposal?

If your project will include a collaboration, your budget request and budget justification should include the additional funds to support the collaboration. The proposal project description must also include information on the nature of the collaboration and how the collaboration supports the project goals. The proposal also needs to include a letter of collaboration (PAPPG [II.C.2.j](#)) from the partnering program that agrees to the proposed collaboration as described in the project description. The collaboration should be described in the letter of intent if known when submitted.

25. What is the NSF INCLUDES National Network?

Information on the NSF INCLUDES National Network can be found at https://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/nsfincludes/index.jsp. This site will provide links to NSF INCLUDES Alliance awards and the NSF INCLUDES Coordination Hub. The ADVANCE partnership can be with one or more current or past NSF INCLUDES grantees including the coordination hub.

26. What kind of activities can we propose with the additional funds for collaborating with the NSF INCLUDES National Network?

The additional funds could be allocated to the costs of maintaining the partnership with the NSF INCLUDES entity such as travel and staff time and for implementing the collaboration activities. A collaboration between an ADVANCE project and a component of the NSF INCLUDES National Network should be mutually beneficial. Expertise, tools and materials, and strategies could be shared between the projects to enhance the impact of either or both projects. The partnership could be about sharing systemic change and gender equity expertise, experience and knowledge of promising strategies, and/or increasing the reach or rate of the adaptation through access to larger numbers of stakeholders. For example, an ADVANCE Partnership project could have an NSF INCLUDES launch pilot project as a partner to build on the lessons learned and stakeholder development work started by the launch pilot if relevant to ADVANCE goals. Another example may be an ADVANCE Partnership project that partners with the NSF INCLUDES Coordination Hub to facilitate the broad adaptation of promising systemic change strategies relevant to ADVANCE goals.

27. What are some examples of NSF funded graduate education projects that are appropriate for partnering on an Adaptation project?

NSF funded graduate education programs for potential partnering include the programs such as: [Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate \(AGEP\)](#), [Innovations in Graduate Education \(IGE\)](#), [CyberCorps \(R\): Scholarship for Service \(SFS\)](#), [National Science Foundation Research Traineeship program \(NRT\)](#), or a graduate education focused component of the NSF INCLUDES National Network via the coordination hub or other NSF INCLUDES award (https://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/nsfincludes/index.jsp). Note that the collaboration between the ADVANCE project and the graduate education project cannot provide direct support to students, faculty, or postdoctoral scholars.

28. Does the NSF funded graduate education project need to be current or can the project have already ended?

If the NSF funded activities in the graduate education project have ended but the project is still in operation because it has been sustained by other non-NSF funding or institutionalized then yes, the partnership can be pursued. The letter of collaboration from the graduate education program should explain that the project has been sustained.

29. If we partner with an NSF funded graduate education project can we use the additional funds to provide direct support to graduate students or postdoctoral scholars?

No. The entire ADVANCE project still needs to focus on systemic changes to mediate or eliminate systemic inequities. No ADVANCE funds should be allocated for direct student or postdoctoral support unless those students and scholars are working to implement or evaluate the ADVANCE project as project staff.

30. What kind of activities can we propose with the additional funds for collaborating with a NSF graduate education project?

The additional funds are intended to support the alignment of systemic changes between the graduate

education project and the ADVANCE project (not direct support to students or faculty). The additional funds could cover the costs of maintaining the partnership such as travel and staff time and for implementing collaboration activities. A collaboration between an ADVANCE project and a NSF-funded graduate education project should be mutually beneficial. Expertise, tools and materials, and strategies could be shared between the projects to enhance the impact of either or both projects. A collaboration could be the translation of the ADVANCE project's systemic change strategies to the graduate education project. For example, work-life balance policies and options for part-time status developed for faculty could be adapted for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars as part of the collaboration. The collaboration may also focus on sharing ADVANCE expertise to infuse intersectional and equity perspectives into the graduate education project to enhance the impact of the graduate education project.

31. Are additional ADVANCE program funds available for collaborating with NSF INCLUDES or NSF STEM graduate education programs?

Approximately three Adaptation projects are expected to qualify for an additional \$100,000 for collaborating with an NSF funded graduate education project and three Partnerships projects are expected to qualify for an additional \$250,000 for collaborating with the NSF INCLUDES National Network.

LETTERS OF COLLABORATION

32. The solicitation requires "letters of collaboration" from key administrators and partners. Are these letters of collaboration required to follow the language specified in PAPPG [II.C.2.j](#)?

No, the solicitation provides guidance to provide more information in letters of collaboration from key partners and leaders about their role and commitment to the project implementation, evaluation, and sustainability. The PAPPG language is "recommended" language if there is no additional guidance provided in the solicitation. Note that the ADVANCE program does not require cost sharing. Please review the guidance on the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal ([Chapter II.C.2.i](#)) and the section on cost sharing ([II.C.2g\(xii\)](#)).

33. Can we include a "letter of support" for our project from a person or organization not involved in the implementation of the project as a collaborative partner?

No. Only letters of collaboration are permitted in ADVANCE proposals and NSF may return without review any proposal that includes letters of support ([II.C.2.j](#)).

34. We are planning on collaborating with the NSF INCLUDES National Network or a NSF graduate education program. Should we include letters of collaboration from these partners and should it follow the recommended language in the PAPPG [II.C.2.j](#)?

Yes, letters of collaboration should be included from the organization(s) that will participate in the proposed collaboration. The letters can include more information beyond that the "recommended" language in the PAPPG. Information on the collaborator's facilities, equipment and resources may be included in the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal ([Chapter II.C.2.i](#)).

ELIGIBILITY

35. My IHE had an ADVANCE IT-Catalyst award. Can we apply for a Catalyst grant under this solicitation?

No. Former IT-Catalyst grantees are encouraged to apply to the Adaptation or Institutional Transformation track. Under this solicitation, Catalyst proposals may only be submitted by non-profit IHEs that are not, and have not been, the lead grantee on any type of ADVANCE award. This includes the following types of ADVANCE awards: Institutional Transformation (IT), Leadership, Partnerships for the Adaptation, Implementation and Dissemination (PAID), Partnerships for Learning and Adaptation Networks: STEM Discipline (PLAN-D), Partnerships for Learning and Adaptation Networks: IHE (PLAN-IHE), IT-Catalyst, Adaptation, and Partnership.

36. We had an Institutional Transformation (IT) award many years ago and would like to adapt strategies previously developed that were focused on gender equity to racial and ethnic equity. Can we apply for an Adaptation project to do this work?

No, this type of work would not be appropriate for an Adaptation proposal, but you could apply for a Partnership project with other organizations (which could include other past or current IT grantees). Note that all ADVANCE proposals are expected to take an intersectional perspective and consider the salient categories of social identity for the project. Specifically, proposers should recognize that gender, race and ethnicity do not exist in isolation from each other and other categories of social identity, such as disability status, sexual orientation, foreign-born and foreign-trained status, faculty appointment type, etc.

37. My IHE had an Institutional Transformation (IT) award, can we apply for another IT award?

No.

38. My IHE had an Institutional Transformation (IT) award, can we apply for an Adaptation or Catalyst award?

No.

39. My IHE has or had an Institutional Transformation (IT) award, can we be the lead or a partner on a Partnership proposals?

Yes, your IHE can participate in as many Partnership projects as you want to participate in. Note that an IHE or organization can only be the lead on one Partnership proposal per competition.

40. My IHE wants to submit a IT-Preliminary proposal, can we also submit an Adaptation proposal?

Yes, an IHE could submit proposals to both at the same time because the IT-Preliminary proposal only results in a decision to invite or not invite for a full IT proposal. But your IHE could not have both an IT and Adaptation award at the same time. The IHE would need to choose which to pursue - IT or Adaptation - if they were invited to submit a full IT proposal based on the preliminary proposal. Note that an IHE can only have one ADVANCE IT award. An institution that gets an Adaptation award could apply for an Institutional Transformation project later, but not the other way around.

41. My IHE wants to submit a IT-Preliminary proposal, can we also submit an Catalyst proposal?

Yes, but these types of projects are very different in scope and it would not make sense for one IHE to apply to both. The Catalyst proposal will be asking for basic support to do ground work to assess the institution where as the IT proposal would be asking for advanced support to do research and innovation. An IHE could not have both an IT and Catalyst award at the same time. An institution that gets a Catalyst award could apply for an

Adaptation or Institutional Transformation project later but not the other way around.

42. My IHE wants to submit an Adaptation proposal, can we also submit an Catalyst proposal?

No. Your IHE should determine which type of ADVANCE project is more appropriate for submission in this competition. An institution that gets a Catalyst award would be eligible to apply for an Adaptation or Institutional Transformation project later but not the other way around.

43. Are single STEM departments eligible for an ADVANCE Adaptation award?

No. Adaptation projects from IHEs must include all the STEM disciplines that the institution has in the ADVANCE project. Note that a partnership between STEM departments at different institutions within a discipline area would be appropriate for a Partnership proposal if the project proposed to result in national or regional impact within that discipline area.

44. Can two or more STEM departments at different institutions partner in a Partnership proposal?

Technically this would be permitted but note that all Partnership proposals are expected to have regional or national impact and demonstrate a significant reach. A partnership between two STEM departments is likely not going to result in regional or national impact or have significant reach. However, a partnership of a significant number of doctoral granting physics departments, might be able to make the case for national impact and significant reach. If several STEM departments within a single institution are interested in this work, then you should review the Adaptation and Catalyst opportunities which would include all the STEM departments at your institution (please review the eligibility limitations for each of these opportunities).

LITERATURE THAT MAY BE HELPFUL

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