

Ceramics (CER)

PROGRAM SOLICITATION

NSF 19-515

REPLACES DOCUMENT(S):

NSF 16-597, PD 15-774



National Science Foundation

Directorate for Mathematical & Physical Sciences
Division of Materials Research

Full Proposal Deadline(s):

Proposals Accepted Anytime

Investigators are advised that the following dates – March 15 to May 15 and July 15 to Aug. 15 – should, optimally, be avoided for submissions.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND REVISION NOTES

- Updates have been made to better align with the Division of Materials Research (DMR) solicitations: Topical Materials Research Programs (DMR-TMRP), including Condensed Matter and Materials Theory (CMMT). Accordingly, language about Return Without Review has been strengthened throughout.
- Clarification has been added about the timing restrictions. Through this solicitation, investigators may submit only one proposal across DMR to any of the TMRPs (including CMMT) as PI or co-PI during the annual proposal acceptance window. Specifically, **a submission from an investigator, whether PI or co-PI, to the CER program cannot be within 6 months before or after the submission date of any proposal from that same investigator, whether PI or co-PI, to any DMR-TMRP** (including CMMT). This includes proposals under GOALI, RUI/ROA, and binational collaborative research programs.
- Proposals for EAGER, RAPID, RAISE, and conferences, as well as supplements to existing grants, are not subject to this limitation and may be submitted any time after consultation with the cognizant Program Officer.
- Although proposals are accepted at any time to the CER Program, investigators are advised that the following dates – March 15 to May 15, and July 15 to Aug. 15 – should, optimally, be avoided for submissions.
- All proposals submitted to this program (other than the following exceptions) must be submitted through this solicitation, otherwise they will be returned without external review. Exceptions are proposals through mechanisms that have their own solicitation such as CAREER and RUI/ROA. CAREER proposals should be submitted through the CAREER solicitation by the deadline date specified in it. RUI/ROA proposals should be submitted through the RUI/ROA solicitation.
- This solicitation follows the NSF [Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide](#) (PAPPG), but has additional requirements. These are specified in Section II. Program Description, Section IV. Eligibility Information, and Section V.A Proposal Preparation Instructions. For CER proposals, **Suggested Reviewers are requested**, whereas Revision Statements are optional.

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

General Information

Program Title:

Ceramics (CER)

Synopsis of Program:

This program supports fundamental scientific research in ceramics (e.g., oxides, carbides, nitrides and borides), glass-ceramics, inorganic glasses, ceramic-based composites and inorganic carbon-based materials. Projects should be centered on experiments; inclusion of computational and theory components are encouraged. The objective of the program is to increase fundamental understanding and to develop predictive capabilities for relating synthesis, processing, and microstructure of these materials to their properties and ultimate performance in various environments and applications. Research to enhance or enable the discovery or creation of new ceramic materials is welcome. Development of new experimental techniques or novel approaches to carry out projects is encouraged. Topics supported include basic processes and mechanisms associated with nucleation and growth of thin films; bulk crystal growth; phase transformations and equilibria; morphology; surface modification; corrosion, interfaces and grain boundary structure; and defects.

Additional Information

Investigators are encouraged to include all anticipated broader impact activities in their initial proposals, rather than planning on supplemental funding requests. Most projects include: (1) the anticipated significance on science, engineering and/or technology including possible benefits to society, (2) plans for the dissemination, and (3) broadening participation of underrepresented groups and/or excellence in training, mentoring, and/or teaching. Many successful proposals include one additional broader impact activity.

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.

- Dr. Lynnette D. Madsen, Program Director (CER), telephone: (703) 292-4936, fax: (703) 292-9035, email: lmadsen@nsf.gov

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

- 47.049 --- Mathematical and Physical Sciences

Award Information

Anticipated Type of Award: Standard Grant or Continuing Grant

Estimated Number of Awards: 25

Anticipated Funding Amount: \$10,000,000

Subject to the availability of funds

Specific information on current awards by the program can be found by using the NSF Award Search engine at <https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/advancedSearch.jsp> to search for awards by Element Code 1774.

Eligibility Information

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:

See "Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or Co-PI" below.

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:

There are no restrictions or limits.

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

An investigator may only have one submission to CER at a given time.

The submission date of a proposal from an investigator, whether PI or co-PI, to the CER program cannot be within 6 months before or after the submission date of any proposal from that same investigator, whether PI or co-PI, to any DMR Topical Materials Research Program (also variously known as Individual Investigator Award (IIA) Program, or Core Program, or Disciplinary Program). If more than one proposal is submitted, the earliest proposal will be retained (whether as PI or co-PI) and any subsequent proposals will be returned without review. A list of DMR Topical Materials Research Programs can be found at <https://www.nsf.gov/funding/programs.jsp?org=DMR>, under "Topical

Materials Research Programs."

Proposals for EAGER, RAPID, RAISE, and conferences, as well as supplements to existing grants, are not subject to this limitation and may be submitted any time after consultation with the cognizant NSF Program Officer.

Investigators with proposals submitted to the Designing Materials to Revolutionize and Engineer Our Future (DMREF), Partnership for Research and Education in Materials (PREM), Materials Research Science and Engineering Centers (MRSEC), and Materials Innovation Platforms (MIP) programs (or other divisions/offices at NSF) may have a concurrent CER submission.

Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions

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.
 - 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).

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):**

Proposals Accepted Anytime

Investigators are advised that the following dates – March 15 to May 15 and July 15 to Aug. 15 – should, optimally, be avoided for submissions.

Proposal Review Information Criteria

Merit Review Criteria:

National Science Board approved criteria apply.

Award Administration Information

Award Conditions:

Standard NSF award conditions apply.

Reporting Requirements:

Standard NSF reporting requirements apply.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Through the Ceramics Program (CER), the Division of Materials Research (DMR) supports fundamental scientific research in ceramics (e.g., oxides, carbides, nitrides and borides), glass-ceramics, inorganic glasses, ceramic-based composites and inorganic carbon-based materials.

II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This program supports fundamental scientific research in ceramics (e.g., oxides, carbides, nitrides and borides), glass-ceramics, inorganic glasses, ceramic-based composites and inorganic carbon-based materials. Projects should be centered on experiments; inclusion of computational and theory components are encouraged. The objective of the program is to increase fundamental understanding and to develop predictive capabilities for relating synthesis, processing, and microstructure of these materials to their properties and ultimate performance in various environments and applications. Research to enhance or enable the discovery or creation of new ceramic materials is welcome. Development of new experimental techniques or novel approaches to carry out projects is encouraged. Topics supported include basic processes and mechanisms associated with nucleation and growth of thin films; bulk crystal growth; phase transformations and equilibria; morphology; surface modification; corrosion, interfaces and grain boundary structure; and defects.

Projects currently supported by the program can be found by using the NSF Award Search (Program Information) engine and entering Element Code 1774.

Important Additional Information

All proposals submitted to the CER program (other than the following exceptions) must be submitted through this solicitation, otherwise they will be returned without review. Exceptions are proposals through mechanisms that have their own solicitation such as CAREER and RUI/ROA. CAREER proposals should be submitted through the CAREER solicitation by the deadline date specified in it. RUI/ROA proposals should be submitted through the RUI/ROA solicitation.

DMR's Topical Materials Research (also known as Individual Investigator Award (IIA) Programs, or Core Programs, or Disciplinary Programs), include: Biomaterials (BMAT), Ceramics (CER), Condensed Matter Physics (CMP), Condensed Matter and Materials Theory (CMMT), Electronic and Photonic Materials (EPM), Metals and Metallic Nanostructures (MMN), Polymers (POL), and Solid State and Materials Chemistry (SSMC). A submission from an investigator, whether PI or co-PI, to the CER program cannot be within 6 months before or after the submission date of any proposal from that same investigator, whether PI or co-PI, to any DMR-TMRP. If more than one proposal is submitted, the earliest proposal will be retained (whether as PI or co-PI) and any subsequent proposals will be returned without review.

This includes proposals under the following special categories:

- Grant opportunities for Academic Liaison with Industry ([GOALI](#))
- Facilitating Research at Primarily Undergraduate Institutions (RUI/ROA), [NSF 14-579](#)
- Dear Colleague Letter: NSF and US-Israel Binational Science Foundation, [NSF 17-120](#)

Investigators with proposals submitted to programs other than DMR disciplinary research activity programs such as DMREF, PREM, MRSEC, and MIP programs, may have a concurrent CER submission.

An investigator may only have one submission to CER at a given time. Investigators must wait 12 months between submissions to CER. Failure to observe these submission constraints may lead to the CER proposal being returned without review.

Proposals that are resubmissions of proposals to CER or are revisions of proposals that have been declined in other NSF programs can be submitted to CER only after one year from the original date of submission. Submission may include a statement on one page in the Single Copy Document section that presents in adequate detail how the proposal has been modified from the previous submission in response to the reviews and any Program Officer comments. The Single Copy Document section is not available to reviewers. Resubmissions that have been declined three times and are resubmitted may be returned without review.

Proposals that fall outside the scope and mission of the Ceramics Program within the Division of Materials Research will be returned without review. PIs uncertain about whether or not their project is suitable for submission to the Ceramics Program may submit a draft of their NSF Project Summary by e-mail to the Program Director for comment.

Normally, CER projects have one or two investigators – i.e. a PI and sometimes a co-PI. Projects with more than two investigators should note that the budget is per project and does not scale with the number of investigators.

A proposal that may be of interest to more than one NSF program can request co-review by indicating more than one program under "For Consideration by NSF Organization Unit(s)" of the proposal Cover Sheet. If such a proposal selects CER as a secondary program, the proposal must be submitted by the proposal submission deadline of the first program. If such a proposal selects CER as the primary program, it is highly encouraged the proposal be submitted by proposal submission deadline of the secondary program in order to facilitate the co-review process.

Prior to preparing any proposal for submission to CER requesting funding through a discretionary mechanism such as EAGER/RAPID, or support for a conference, the PI should contact the CER Program Director to determine the appropriateness of the proposal for both the program and the particular type of proposal.

Supplemental funding is intended only for unanticipated opportunities that arise during the course of the project. Projects anticipating the inclusion of Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU), or Research Experiences for Teachers (RET) activities should include those as part of the research proposal. Exceptions include the [Career-Life Balance initiative](#), [MPS AGEP-GRS Dear Colleague Letter](#) and [MPS-GRSV Dear Colleague Letter](#).

III. AWARD INFORMATION

Four-year projects are encouraged in the Ceramics Program; projects of shorter durations are also welcome. Budgets are typically \$110,000 to \$160,000 per year for each project, subject to the availability of funds; smaller budgets are permissible. Budgets in excess of \$160,000 per year may be returned without review.

IV. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

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:

See "Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or Co-PI" below.

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:

There are no restrictions or limits.

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

An investigator may only have one submission to CER at a given time.

The submission date of a proposal from an investigator, whether PI or co-PI, to the CER program cannot be within 6 months before or after the submission date of any proposal from that same investigator, whether PI or co-PI, to any DMR Topical Materials Research Program (also variously known as Individual Investigator Award (IIA) Program, or Core Program, or Disciplinary Program). If more than one proposal is submitted, the earliest proposal will be retained (whether as PI or co-PI) and any subsequent proposals will be returned without review. A list of DMR Topical Materials Research Programs can be found at <https://www.nsf.gov/funding/programs.jsp?org=DMR>, under "Topical Materials Research Programs."

Proposals for EAGER, RAPID, RAISE, and conferences, as well as supplements to existing grants, are not subject to this limitation and may be submitted any time after consultation with the cognizant NSF Program Officer.

Investigators with proposals submitted to the Designing Materials to Revolutionize and Engineer Our Future (DMREF), Partnership for Research and Education in Materials (PREM), Materials Research Science and Engineering Centers (MRSEC), and Materials Innovation Platforms (MIP) programs (or other divisions/offices at NSF) may have a concurrent CER submission.

V. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

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. 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. 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). 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.

In determining which method to utilize in the electronic preparation and submission of the proposal, please note the following:

Collaborative Proposals. All collaborative proposals submitted as separate submissions from multiple organizations must be submitted via the NSF FastLane system. PAPPG Chapter II.D.3 provides additional information on collaborative proposals.

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.

The following requirements and instructions supplement the NSF PAPPG and the NSF *Grants.gov Application Guide*:

Requested - Suggested Reviewers: For the Ceramics Program (CER), investigators are **requested** to upload under Single-Copy Documents a list (with full names, affiliations, expertise, and email addresses) of at least five suggested reviewers who are experts in the particular field of ceramics, are especially well-qualified to review the topic, and are at arm's length (i.e. they are not close friends, collaborators over the past 48 months, co-editors over the past 24 months, or have any other conflicts of interest listed in Exhibit II-2 of the PAPPG, https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg18_1/pappg_2.jsp#2ex2). This list should also include the Principal Investigator's name and institution at the top of the page.

Optional - Revision Statement: For those proposals that are resubmissions of previously declined proposals by any NSF Program, Investigators are requested to upload under Single-Copy Documents a statement (maximum length one page) that discusses specifically how the present proposal has been modified in response to the comments of the reviewers, panel, and Program Officer (as the case may be). Proposals that in the judgment of the Program Officer have not been substantially revised will be returned without review.

B. Budgetary Information

Cost Sharing:

Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.

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):**

Proposals Accepted Anytime

Investigators are advised that the following dates – March 15 to May 15 and July 15 to Aug. 15 – should, optimally, be avoided for submissions.

D. FastLane/Grants.gov Requirements

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. 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 webpage: <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. 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

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/.

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

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.

B. Review and Selection Process

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

A. Notification of the Award

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

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. Paper copies may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-7827 or by e-mail from 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.

C. Reporting Requirements

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=pappg.

VIII. AGENCY CONTACTS

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:

- Dr. Lynnette D. Madsen, Program Director (CER), telephone: (703) 292-4936, fax: (703) 292-9035, email: lmadsen@nsf.gov

For questions related to the use of FastLane, contact:

- FastLane Help Desk, telephone: 1-800-673-6188; e-mail: 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.

IX. OTHER INFORMATION

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>.

Closely related programs include:

Division of Materials Research:

- Topical Materials Research Programs (DMR-TMRP) [NSF 17-580](#)
- Condensed Matter and Materials Theory (CMMT) [NSF 16-596](#)

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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.

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- **Location:** 2415 Eisenhower Avenue,
Alexandria, VA 22314
- **For General Information**
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- **TDD (for the hearing-impaired):** (703) 292-5090
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- **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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