



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 20-053

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) for National Science Foundation (NSF) Proposers and Awardees

(Revised March 4, 2020)

This document addresses questions associated with proposal submission and award management that may arise in relation to COVID-19. NSF is providing this information as a service to our proposer and awardee communities in the hope it will address most of the questions that may arise in this regard. Given that COVID-19 and the associated impacts continue to evolve, proposers and awardees are strongly encouraged to monitor this website for updates.

QUESTIONS ABOUT NSF DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER (DCL) [NSF 20-052](#):

1. [Why is NSF offering this DCL?](#)
2. [Who do I contact if I am interested in submitting a COVID-19 related proposal pursuant to this DCL? Is there a deadline by which I must make this contact? How fast will I receive a response on my proposal?](#)
3. [Will NSF help me gain access to foreign locales, secure visas, or assist in providing logistical support?](#)
4. [My research requires me to travel to a country with a high volume of COVID-19 cases, but I see the U.S. Department of State has issued a travel advisory to that destination. Can I still submit a proposal?](#)
5. [Are there any special considerations I should account for when considering research that requires me to engage with foreign counterparts where COVID-19 is, or has been, prevalent?](#)
6. [Will NSF support research that involves gain-of-function in COVID-19?](#)
7. [The DCL encourages RAPID proposals that address the immediate impacts of COVID-19. My concept is to instead address a longer-term or more general issue and seeks to](#)

understand conditions caused by the outbreak. Is this concept acceptable?

IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON SUBMISSION OF OTHER NSF PROPOSALS AND EXISTING NSF AWARDS:

8. I have a question related to COVID-19's potential impact on my research project, project-related travel, or field work. Where are some of the places I can find helpful information?
9. Will NSF provide for an extension to my award if the planned activities are disrupted by the COVID-19 public health threat?
10. I am a PI on a NSF-funded Conference or Travel award, but the meeting has been canceled. Who do I contact regarding the impact to the NSF award?
11. A conference has been canceled, but I have nonrefundable travel and/or hotel costs. Can these be charged to a NSF Conference or Travel grant?
12. I am involved with a Conference or Travel award for a meeting that is taking place in the coming weeks. Should I continue with plans for the meeting?
13. I am considering submitting a Conference or Travel proposal to NSF for a future meeting. The site of the meeting has not yet been selected; should I take into account COVID-19 in conference planning and site selection?
14. My NSF grant involves an exchange of researchers (including students) and/or other foreign travel. Should I continue with plans?
15. I have plans to attend a large scientific gathering. Should I continue?
16. I am quarantined for a period of time. There is a NSF proposal deadline during my quarantine period and some essential materials I need are in my office. Can I receive an extension to the deadline?
17. My university has asked staff to stay home for an undetermined period of time. How would I petition for an extension of a proposal deadline?
18. I am hosting a Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) Site. If a student arrives who appears sick, can I ask them to return home?
19. I am hosting a REU Site or similar activity involving the participation of non-local students. A student from another institution arrived and appeared to be ill. Health authorities have ordered that the student be quarantined. Can I use the REU Site grant funds to cover the cost of housing and meals during the quarantine period, even though the student is unable to participate in REU Site (or other) activities?
20. I am a PI for an NSF REU Site, Conference, or other distributed collaborative research project. I am considering replacing the face-to-face interaction with the use of virtual

technology. Beyond simple videoconferencing, I would like to use augmented reality or other technology to make the interactions more effective. May I submit a supplemental funding request to purchase and distribute the necessary equipment and/or contract with a service provider?

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION IN NSF MERIT REVIEW PANELS:

21. I have concerns about traveling to a merit review panel at NSF. What should I do?
22. I have already booked my travel and accommodations. Will NSF reimburse me for these costs?

QUESTIONS ABOUT NSF DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER (DCL) [NSF 20-052](#):

1. **Why is NSF offering this DCL?**

NSF's mission is "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; and to secure the national defense." NSF-funded research can explore how to model and understand the spread of COVID-19; to inform and educate about the science of virus transmission and prevention; and to encourage the development of processes and actions to address this global challenge. Results from NSF-funded research can inform national and international preparedness and response decision making, and explore lessons learned and best practices for the future.

2. **Who do I contact if I am interested in submitting a COVID-19 related proposal pursuant to this DCL? Is there a deadline by which I must make this contact? How fast will I receive a response on my proposal?**

All questions about the DCL should be directed either to a program officer managing an NSF program with which the research would be aligned or to rapid-covid19@nsf.gov. Prospective principal investigators (PIs) may contact program officers or this email address anytime. There is no deadline for responding to this DCL, but NSF is seeking to support research that will address the immediate public health threat of COVID-19. NSF will be as responsive to queries as practicable.

3. **Will NSF help me gain access to foreign locales, secure visas, or assist in providing logistical support?**

No, NSF will not be able to help with access to foreign locales, visas, or logistical support for funded projects.

4. **My research requires me to travel to a country with a high volume of COVID-19**

cases, but I see the U.S. Department of State has issued a travel advisory to that destination. Can I still submit a proposal?

Prospective PIs are directed to consult with their sponsored projects offices and the State Department's Travel Advisories website (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>) for guidance about foreign travel prior to formulating a research plan and submitting a proposal to NSF. You may submit a proposal, but you should be aware that successful execution may be impacted by applicable travel restrictions, including the decisions of foreign governments.

- 5. Are there any special considerations I should account for when considering research that requires me to engage with foreign counterparts where COVID-19 is, or has been, prevalent?**

Given that businesses and universities are closed in certain parts of the world as a result of COVID-19, it may be more challenging to engage with foreign counterparts. PIs are encouraged to consider, as they develop research plans, that individuals may be directly affected by COVID-19.

- 6. Will NSF support research that involves gain-of-function in COVID-19?**

No, NSF does not fund research that would be considered to lead to a gain of function of agents associated with the U.S. Government's policy on dual use research of concern. While COVID-19 is not one of the recognized agents of concern, for purposes of the DCL and RAPID research, NSF will not consider requests for gain-of-function research.

- 7. The DCL encourages RAPID proposals that address the immediate impacts of COVID-19. My concept is to instead address a longer-term or more general issue and seeks to understand conditions caused by the outbreak. Is this concept acceptable?**

Yes, NSF will consider such concepts, and prospective PIs are encouraged to contact either a program officer managing an NSF program with which the research would be aligned or to email rapid-covid19@nsf.gov.

IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON SUBMISSION OF OTHER NSF PROPOSALS AND EXISTING NSF AWARDS:

- 8. I have a question related to COVID-19's potential impact on my research project, project-related travel, or field work. Where are some of the places I can find helpful information?**

Your employing organization is an ideal starting point. In many cases, colleges and universities have created websites offering information.

Beyond that, we encourage you to consult the following resources:

- COVID-19 in general: see the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) and [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) websites, and also refer to your state or local health department;
- Travel to/from and quarantine in foreign countries: see the [State Department Travel Advisories website](#); and
- NSF website: NSF-funded facilities may post guidance for users of the facilities on their websites, and NSF will update this document with pointers to that information as it becomes available.

9. Will NSF provide for an extension to my award if the planned activities are disrupted by the COVID-19 public health threat?

All NSF awards are eligible for one-year grantee-approved no-cost extensions and then further extensions as approved by NSF. If you foresee a need for NSF-approved extensions, you should include that information in your annual report and discuss the need ahead of time with the cognizant NSF program officer for your award. See the [Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide](#) (PAPPG), Chapter VI.D.3, for additional information.

10. I am a PI on a NSF-funded Conference or Travel award, but the meeting has been canceled. Who do I contact regarding the impact to the NSF award?

You should contact the cognizant NSF program officer about this situation. In light of the public health threat, you may wish to consider alternate plans, such as providing or using options for virtual participation. In addition, NSF program officers will be open to rescheduling the conference or using the funds for a future meeting that is consistent with the original scope and objectives of the award.

11. A conference has been canceled, but I have nonrefundable travel and/or hotel costs. Can these be charged to a NSF Conference or Travel grant?

NSF is currently working internally as well as with our federal partners on a number of proposal and award-related issues pertaining to COVID-19. NSF will communicate with the community about these issues and will provide guidance as further information becomes available. In the meantime, please continue to follow all relevant policies and procedures, including those of your organization, and apply those practices consistently.

12. I am involved with a Conference or Travel award for a meeting that is taking place in the coming weeks. Should I continue with plans for the meeting?

NSF recommends first reaching out to the conference organizer or host. They are best equipped to understand the guidance at the location of the event. They may recommend having contingency plans if the event is ultimately cancelled or re-located, or might be planning to provide options for virtual participation. If you are the organizer, you may wish to consider developing contingency plans.

We also suggest checking the [State Department Travel Advisories website](#) if the conference involves foreign travel.

- 13. I am considering submitting a Conference or Travel proposal to NSF for a future meeting. The site of the meeting has not yet been selected; should I take into account COVID-19 in conference planning and site selection?**

Travel logistics, accessibility, and health and safety considerations of the participants should always be a foremost consideration in any Conference proposal. Since the COVID-19 threat is still evolving, it is important to consider flexibility and alternative plans in a proposal to support travel or a conference. For foreign travel, you should consult the [State Department Travel Advisories website](#).

- 14. My NSF grant involves an exchange of researchers (including students) and/or other foreign travel. Should I continue with plans?**

Travel logistics, accessibility, and health and safety considerations of the participants in an active research project should always be a foremost consideration. NSF recommends consulting with your organization about its policies and procedures. You may consider approaching the planned researcher exchanges and/or other foreign travel with flexibility, and/or devising alternate plans including virtual participation as appropriate. As noted above, NSF understands that plans for active research projects may be disrupted, to the point of needing extensions on the original award durations. For foreign travel, you should consult the [State Department Travel Advisories website](#).

- 15. I have plans to attend a large scientific gathering. Should I continue?**

As noted previously, NSF recommends first consulting with your organization about its policies and practices. In addition, you may consider reaching out to the organizer or host of the scientific gathering. They are best equipped to understand the guidance at the location of the event. They may have contingency plans if the event is ultimately canceled or re-located, or they might be planning to provide options for virtual participation. We also suggest checking the [State Department Travel Advisories website](#) if the gathering involves foreign travel.

- 16. I am quarantined for a period of time. There is a NSF proposal deadline during my quarantine period and some essential materials I need are in my office. Can I**

receive an extension to the deadline?

Researchers or sponsored projects office staff from organizations that have been directly affected and are unable to meet stated NSF deadlines should contact the cognizant NSF program officer to discuss the issue. NSF will consider extensions to the submission deadline on a case-by-case basis (and, in a few cases, on a program-by-program basis), understanding that it may be particularly difficult for individuals impacted to contact NSF. See NSF [PAPPG](#) Chapter I.F for additional information on procedures for submitting such requests.

17. My university has asked staff to stay home for an undetermined period of time. How would I petition for an extension of a proposal deadline?

Researchers or sponsored projects office staff from organizations that have been affected and are unable to meet stated NSF deadlines should contact the cognizant NSF program office to discuss the issue. NSF will consider extensions to the submission deadline on a case-by-case basis (and, in a few cases, on a program-by-program basis), understanding that it may be particularly difficult for individuals impacted to contact NSF. See NSF [PAPPG](#) Chapter I.F for additional information on procedures for submitting such requests.

18. I am hosting a Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) Site. If a student arrives who appears sick, can I ask them to return home?

Please follow the appropriate policies and practices of your organization. More generally, NSF defers to awardees on decisions regarding the safety and security of their faculty, students, and personnel.

19. I am hosting a REU Site or similar activity involving the participation of non-local students. A student from another institution arrived and appeared to be ill. Health authorities have ordered that the student be quarantined. Can I use the REU Site grant funds to cover the cost of housing and meals during the quarantine period, even though the student is unable to participate in REU Site (or other) activities?

NSF is currently working internally as well as with our federal partners on a number of proposal and award-related issues pertaining to COVID-19. NSF will communicate with the community about these issues and will provide guidance as further information becomes available. In the meantime, please continue to follow all relevant policies and procedures, including those of your organization, and apply those practices consistently.

20. I am a PI for an NSF REU Site, Conference, or other distributed collaborative research project. I am considering replacing the face-to-face interaction with the

use of virtual technology. Beyond simple videoconferencing, I would like to use augmented reality or other technology to make the interactions more effective. May I submit a supplemental funding request to purchase and distribute the necessary equipment and/or contract with a service provider?

Contact the cognizant NSF program officer managing your award. Supplements can be made to address unexpected events that threaten the original scope and objectives of an award but are contingent on the availability of funding.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION IN NSF MERIT REVIEW PANELS:

21. I have concerns about traveling to a merit review panel at NSF. What should I do?

Contact the cognizant NSF program officer as soon as practicable. NSF will be flexible about accommodating virtual participation.

22. I have already booked my travel and accommodations. Will NSF reimburse me for these costs?

Panelists who wish to switch to virtual participation should immediately contact ADTRAV to cancel all reservations. ADTRAV can be reached by phone at (855) 417-4024 or by email to nsfpanel.travel@adtrav.com.

Panelists are responsible for the cancellation of room reservations in sufficient time to retain the deposits on personal credit cards. NSF will not be able to provide reimbursement for such charges. Panelists participating virtually will be compensated in accordance with NSF's standard policy for compensation of virtual meeting participants.