



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 20-111

Dear Colleague Letter: Veterans Research Supplement (VRS) Program

July 29, 2020

Dear Colleague:

Through this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL), the National Science Foundation (NSF) is supporting alternate pathways to encourage veterans' engagement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) research and industry. NSF's commitment to broadening participation is embedded in its Strategic Plan and initiatives such as the [Ten Big Ideas for Future NSF Investment](#) which emphasize the need to pro-actively seek and effectively develop STEM talent from all sectors and groups in our society. NSF recognizes that veterans represent an underutilized workforce for U.S. STEM communities. Through this initiative, NSF hopes to provide additional support to some of the many veterans transitioning from active military service to civilian careers and exploring education options through the [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#).

This Dear Colleague Letter continues the Veterans Research Supplement (VRS) program ([NSF 14-124](#)) to engage veterans in engineering research by providing supplements to active awards in the following Directorate for Engineering (ENG) Divisions/Offices:

- [Chemical, Bioengineering, Environmental and Transport Systems \(CBET\)](#);
- [Civil, Mechanical and Manufacturing Innovation \(CMMI\)](#);
- [Electrical, Communications and Cyber Systems \(ECCS\)](#);
- [Emerging Frontiers and Multidisciplinary Activities \(EFMA\)](#);
- [Engineering Education and Centers \(EEC\)](#); and
- [Industrial Innovation and Partnerships \(IIP\)](#).

The VRS affords veterans who are students, K-12 teachers, or community college faculty an opportunity to work with active ENG grantees to conduct basic and/or industrially relevant research to gain a deeper understanding of engineering. Veterans supported by VRS funding may participate in research activities with any active awardees or affiliated member companies supported by ENG programs.

VETERAN ELIGIBILITY

Under Title 38 USC 101. Definitions:

Veteran means a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

Eligibility to participate as recipients of the VRS will be limited to the following four groups:

1. Veteran full - or part-time STEM undergraduate students at U.S. 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education (IHEs);
2. Veteran full - or part-time STEM graduate students;
3. Veteran K-12 STEM teachers; or
4. Veteran community college STEM faculty.

Eligibility: A request for a VRS may be submitted to one of the programs in the ENG Divisions listed above as a post-award supplement to an existing ENG award. Note: The grantee or PI may request VRS supplemental funds but cannot be the VRS participant.

Anticipated type of award: Supplement to existing ENG awards.

Supplemental funding request preparation and submission instructions: The VRS supplement will be targeted to enable eligible veterans to participate on active NSF/ENG grants. The VRS is not transferable to the dependents of the veterans. Veterans may complete the research experience at any time during the year.

High quality mentoring is important in a VRS and investigators should plan to develop participants' research skills, involving them in the culture of research in the discipline and connect their research experience with their overall course of study and future career plans. PIs requesting a VRS must provide a Research Participant Mentoring Plan describing the mentoring activities that will be provided to the veteran participant supported by this supplement. Mentoring plans should identify the individual(s) who will serve as mentors, as well as describe their mentoring experience.

A request for a VRS may be submitted to one of the programs in the ENG Divisions listed above as a post-award supplement to an existing ENG award. For guidance, contact the cognizant program officer for the grant or cooperative agreement that would be supplemented and nsfvrsprogram@nsf.gov.

Supplemental funding requests must be submitted electronically via the NSF FastLane system and must include a summary of the proposed work, a justification of the need for the supplemental funds, a budget, and a budget justification. If a VRS participant has been pre-

selected, PIs may include a Biographical Sketch as a Supplementary Document. PIs should follow the instructions for requesting supplemental support found in Chapter VI.E.4 of the [NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide](#) (PAPPG).

Anticipated funding amount and estimated number of supplements: Supplements under this DCL will be supported based on proposal quality, availability of funds, and the discretion of the managing Program Director for the award for which the supplemental funding is requested.

Budget Guidance:

Group 1. Veteran full - or part-time STEM undergraduate at U.S. 2- and 4-year IHEs: Please refer to the REU Supplement guidelines provided in the most recent REU Solicitation which can be found here: https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5517.

Group 2. Veteran full - or part-time STEM graduate students: Please use guidance provided in the REU Solicitation (above), RET Solicitation (below), and the proposer's institutional policies regarding graduate student hourly rates to determine an appropriate budget. The budget justification must contain sufficient detail to explain the determined rate.

Group 3. Veteran K-12 STEM teachers and Group 4. Veteran community college STEM faculty: Please refer to the RET Supplement guidelines provided in the most recent RET Solicitation which can be found here: https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=505170.

A VRS typically provides support for one or two veterans to participate in research as part of a new or ongoing NSF-funded research project. However, centers or large research efforts may request support for a number of participants commensurate with the size and nature of the project. Active principal investigators should consult their cognizant NSF program director and nsfvrsprogram@nsf.gov for specific guidance as to the number and availability of supplements. Supplemental funding requests will be internally evaluated per NSF supplemental support guidelines with emphasis on the following components: a clearly defined research project, identification of project deliverables and a project timeline, and an explanation of anticipated benefits to the veteran participant(s).

Results from any VRS activities must be included in the annual project report for the associated award.

Synergy with the Advanced Technological Education (ATE) Program: Dear Colleague Letter: Undergraduate Research Experiences in Advanced Technological Education (ATE-URE, [NSF 20-054](#)) encourages (1) current ATE PIs to implement and study UREs in the context of education in advanced technology fields and (2) calls for research experiences for veterans to foster to foster new collaborations to support veterans and other students.

Prospective investigators outside ATE are encouraged to consider new collaborations with current ATE PIs. To find ATE projects that may be suitable, use the "Advanced Search" function on the NSF website at <https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/advancedSearch.jsp> and search with Element Code 7412.

Additional Opportunity for Veteran Inclusion - Research Experience and Mentoring (REM) Program: Investigators holding an active award from the Emerging Frontiers in Research and Innovation (EFRI) program or an active Engineering Research Center (ERC) award may also consider applying for REM supplemental funding if their cohort includes 6 or more research participants. The most recent REM DCL can be found [here](#).

Point of Contact: For questions regarding the VRS, please contact nsfvrsprogram@nsf.gov.

Sincerely,

Dawn Tilbury
Assistant Director for Engineering