



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 20-132

Dear Colleague Letter: Future of International Research Collaboration Post COVID-19

October 1, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

BACKGROUND

International collaboration ensures the U.S. science and engineering (S&E) community enjoys access to expertise, facilities, data, and research sites across the globe. Keeping the U.S. engaged with global research is critical to the health of our S&E enterprise.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted science and engineering research and education and the international collaborations that accompany them. With international travel currently curtailed and in-person collaborations uncertain for the foreseeable future, researchers are faced with new challenges and opportunities. Many collaborations have been hard hit by health and safety concerns, lab shutdowns, and unreliable internet access. Others have achieved new levels of productivity, taking advantage of technology to speed research advances, data sharing and dissemination of results.

The NSF Office of International Science and Engineering (OISE) seeks to understand the nature and scope of COVID-19 impacts on international collaboration in research and education. OISE further seeks to encourage creative efforts to leverage the unique moment to enable more robust, resilient and sustainable collaborations. OISE anticipates that documenting and sharing lessons will strengthen future international collaboration efforts.

OPPORTUNITY

This letter invites Rapid Response Research (RAPID) and EARly-concept Grants for Exploratory Research (EAGER) proposals for research to clarify lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic for international collaboration and research to strengthen international collaboration in the future. Proposals must focus on research topics unique to international engagement. Proposals should be submitted by institutions eligible to submit proposals to NSF and must

include international collaboration as an integral part of the work. NSF encourages proposals from diverse teams. Proposals from early career investigators are especially welcome.

Research topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- I. Type I: Research to Clarify Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic for International Collaboration
 - Analyzing and synthesizing data from U.S. and international sources on the nature and scope of COVID-19 impacts to illuminate trends in international collaboration;
 - Evaluating the effectiveness of interventions to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic environment;
 - Addressing the unique challenges of field work and other site-specific research.

- II. Type II: Research to Strengthen International Collaboration for the Future
 - Reimagining international collaboration to enhance research productivity and accelerate progress in science and engineering;
 - Improving preparedness to make international collaboration more resilient, moving beyond traditional approaches centered on travel and remote access;
 - Leveraging lessons of COVID-19 experience in the U.S. and abroad to broaden participation in international collaborations.

PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

PIs may request funding using either the RAPID or EAGER mechanism. The RAPID type of proposal is appropriate in cases of "severe urgency with regard to availability of, or access to, data, facilities or specialized equipment, including quick-response research on natural or anthropogenic disasters and similar unanticipated events." RAPID proposals may request funding of up to \$200,000 and an award duration of up to one year. The EAGER type of proposal is appropriate in the case of "exploratory work in its early stages on untested, but potentially transformative, research ideas or approaches." EAGERS provide up to \$300,000 in support for up to two years. OISE anticipates that the Type I proposals may be better suited to the RAPID mechanism while Type II proposals may conform better to EAGER requirements, though PIs should discuss the appropriate type of proposal with the cognizant program officer.

In addition to the standard PAPPG guidelines, proposals under this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) should include the following:

- Proposal Title beginning with the type of proposal and International, Type I or II: e.g. "RAPID International Type I:" or "EAGER International Type II:".
- Budget should include funding for up to two project team members to attend a PI meeting at NSF in the fall of 2021.

- Email documentation from at least one DCL cognizant Program Officer confirming approval to submit a RAPID (or, as appropriate, EAGER) proposal must be uploaded as a Supplementary Document entitled "RAPID (EAGER) – small dash Program Officer Concurrence Email."

Complete guidance on submitting a RAPID proposal may be found in Chapter II.E.1 of the [NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide \(PAPPG\)](#). Guidance on EAGER proposals is available in Chapter II.E.2 of the PAPPG.

NSF plans to share award information and abstracts with the COVID Information Commons (OIA-2028999, <https://covidinfocommons.datascience.columbia.edu>), an open resource to explore NSF-funded research related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHEN TO SUBMIT

Proposals may be submitted at any time until March 31, 2021, or until funds are fully obligated, whichever comes first. Awards will be funded in FY 2021.

CONTACT

For further information, please contact cognizant OISE staff by e-mail:

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Sincerely,

Rebecca Keiser
Office Head
Office of International Science and Engineering