



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 21-049

Dear Colleague Letter: **LEA**ding cultural change through Professional Societies (LEAPS) of Biology

February 19, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

The National Science Foundation's (NSF) Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO) encourages professional societies to submit proposals to develop collaborative networks for facilitating cultural changes in the biological sciences to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. NSF BIO recognizes culture change in the biological sciences as an urgent priority and is committed to supporting efforts that use evidence-based practices to remove barriers for individuals historically excluded from science (based on gender, gender identity, disability status, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or race). Such changes are expected to lead to a community of biologists, including those in positions of authority, that more fully reflects the demographic constitution of the US population.

The purpose of this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) is to encourage proposals that will facilitate collaboration among biology professional societies resulting in advancements at scale that broaden participation at all levels of the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce in biology. These partnerships of societies are envisioned to serve as foci for cultural change toward a more inclusive and diverse scientific community.

Professional societies are uniquely positioned to lead cultural, structural, and social change through appointing or electing society leaders, convening meetings, publishing, issuing awards, providing training, and creating career support networks. They can shape the culture at the scale of the (sub-) discipline and have the potential to influence other disciplines, institutions, and departments. Proposals submitted to this DCL should build networks to generate the changes needed to broaden participation within academic and professional spheres of the biological sciences community. Proposals focused exclusively on recruitment of students, trainees, or early-career scientists or 'fixing the leaking pipeline or the individual' are not appropriate.

We welcome Research Coordination Network ([RCNs](#)) proposals, planning proposals, or

conference proposals that include:

- The participation of multiple societies from more than one biological discipline and/or of multiple societies from the same discipline that range in membership size or other important defining characteristic(s),
- Demonstrated expertise or appropriate partnerships to accomplish equity and inclusion goals and,
- A timeline with benchmarks for measuring success.

We encourage collaborative efforts with societies focused on broadening participation (e.g., Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES), Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) and/or the [NSF INCLUDES National Network](#). Potential partnerships could also include (but would not be limited to) Minority-Serving Institutions (MSI) such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and other organizations or institutions serving diverse populations.

DEADLINE DATE AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

In response to this DCL, BIO encourages submission of Conference proposals, Planning Proposals, or RCN proposals using the following mechanisms:

- Conference proposals should be submitted to the PAPPG following the guidance in Chapter II E.7 and should be directed to the RCN Program in the Division of Biological Infrastructure;
- Planning proposals should be submitted to the Infrastructure Capacity for Biological Research Program ([NSF 21-501](#)) using the guidance in the solicitation; and
- RCN proposals should follow proposal guidance in the RCN solicitation (currently [NSF 17-594](#)) and should be directed to the RCN Program in the Division of Biological Infrastructure. Although the RCN solicitation states that awards should be less than \$500,000 for this activity, we will consider larger awards if well-justified based on the scope of the proposed activity.

For conference and planning Proposals, proposal titles should begin with "LEAPS:". For RCN Proposals, proposal titles should start with "RCN: LEAPS:". Interested parties should contact one of the Program Directors listed below to discuss alignment with this DCL. Note that professional societies can submit proposals directly, if eligible to do so, or proposals can be submitted by other eligible organizations to facilitate the engagement of specific societies to achieve the broadening participation goals. To be eligible for consideration of funding in fiscal year 2021, proposals should be submitted by May 14, 2021. Proposals submitted after that date will be considered for fiscal year 2022 funding.

Please direct any questions pertaining to this DCL to:

- Dan Marena, Program Director, dmarena@nsf.gov
- Wilson Francisco, Program Director, wfrancis@nsf.gov
- Jodie Jawor, Program Director, jjawor@nsf.gov
- Maureen Kearney, Program Director, mkearney@nsf.gov

Sincerely,

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Directorate for Biological Sciences