



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 21-066

Dear Colleague Letter: Supplemental Funding for Postdoctoral Researchers to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts on Research Career Progression

April 6, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

BACKGROUND

NSF seeks to lessen the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) research and STEM education research and development. Known impacts include decreased faculty research productivity and difficulty in initiating and/or maintaining a career trajectory in either STEM or STEM education research and development. The goal of this funding opportunity is to support sustained research productivity and career progression of early career researchers who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Such support could sustain the research careers of new or current postdoctoral researchers, as well as help mitigate pandemic-related reductions in research productivity of early career faculty.

This Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) particularly welcomes requests for supplemental funding to support postdoctoral researchers who are working or will work at institutions that have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. These institutions include, but are not limited to, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges, Alaska Native, Pacific-islander, and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, and/or Hispanic Serving Institutions¹. In addition, this funding opportunity seeks to support research projects that will contribute to diversity, equity, and inclusion in STEM research and STEM education research.

OPPORTUNITY

The NSF Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR) invites grantees with active awards in specific programs (see Eligibility and Priority Funding Areas below) to request supplemental funds to support a new postdoctoral researcher for up to two years or a

continuing postdoctoral researcher for one year. EHR particularly encourages requests from principal investigators who are at institutions that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. It also encourages supplemental funding requests for a postdoctoral researcher from principal investigators who are early in their careers and/or who are still actively building their careers.

NSF will provide supplements of up to \$100,000 (inclusive of indirect costs) for the postdoctoral researcher's annual salary and benefits, based on institutional salary and benefit policies and comparable to that provided to postdoctoral researchers in related fields at the institution. An additional amount up to \$25,000 per year may be requested for research resources, provided sufficient resources are not available in the original award to support the researcher's research and the research project will advance the postdoctoral researcher's eventual research independence. These funds may be used for materials and supplies, equipment, computing resources, conference registrations, collaborations, and publication charges, or related research needs. The budget request should clearly describe both salary and benefits, as well as itemize the research resources needed. The total supplement request, inclusive of indirect costs, should not exceed \$125,000 for a continuing post-doctoral researcher (one year of support), or \$250,000 for a new postdoctoral researcher (two years of support). These amounts may be larger than 20% of the original award.

ELIGIBILITY

This opportunity is open only to organizations with active research and training awards in the following programs:

1. Organizational Change for Gender Equity in STEM Academic Professions (ADVANCE)
2. Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP)
3. Faculty Early Career Development Program (CAREER)
4. Centers for Research Excellence in Science and Technology (CREST) (Note that individuals with postdoctoral fellowships from the CREST-PRF program are not eligible for this supplemental funding)
5. EHR Core Research (ECR)
6. Improving Undergraduate STEM Education: Education and Human Resources (IUSE: EHR)
7. Improving Undergraduate STEM Education: Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI)
8. Inclusion Across the Nation of Communities of Learners of Underrepresented Discoverers in Engineering and Science (NSF INCLUDES)
9. NSF Research Traineeship (NRT)
10. Tribal Colleges and Universities Undergraduate Program (TCUP)
11. Historically Black Colleges and Universities Undergraduate Program (HBCU-UP).

CONDITIONS

Supplemental funding may be used only for support of a postdoctoral researcher to engage in mentored STEM research or STEM education research and development on active EHR awards in the programs listed above. The postdoctoral researcher who is to be supported must be identified in the supplemental funding request and hold a terminal degree at the time that the supplemental funding is awarded. A postdoctoral researcher supported by CREST-PRF program is not eligible to submit a supplemental funding request to this funding opportunity.

The progress of the supported postdoctoral researcher(s) must be included in the original project's annual and final project reports, as appropriate. The PIs, co-PIs, and supported postdoctoral researcher(s) may be asked to participate in follow-up evaluation activities.

HOW TO REQUEST SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Prior to submitting a supplemental funding request, approval must be obtained from the cognizant NSF program director of the original award.

Following approval by the cognizant program director of the original award, supplemental funding requests should be prepared and submitted via FastLane in accordance with the guidance in Chapter VI.E.4 of the [NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide \(PAPPG\)](#).

The supplemental funding request consists of the following components:

1. **Summary of Proposed Work** (up to 3 pages): Description and timeline of the research to be performed by the postdoctoral researcher and how it relates to the supported research project and the researcher's broad career goals, including future research independence.
2. **Justification for Supplement** (up to 1 page): Include description of how the supplemental support for a postdoctoral researcher will aid in mitigating specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the institution, project, PI/Co-PI, and postdoctoral researcher. This description should include the severity of these impacts
3. **Budget and Justification** (up to 1 page): Description of salary and benefits for the postdoctoral researcher; itemized description of requested research support, why this research support cannot be provided from the parent award, and how it will assist the researcher in moving towards an independent research career in STEM and/or STEM education
4. **Other Supplementary Documents**
 - 2-page biographical sketch of the postdoctoral researcher in an [NSF-approved format](#).
 - 1-page description of the research environment and how pandemic impacts on the research environment (if any) are being mitigated to ensure the research can be

done.

- o 1-page postdoctoral mentoring plan that includes how the postdoctoral researcher will be supported to explore broad potential career pathways.
- o Confirmation of Institutional Review Board/Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee approvals, permits, and/or other special clearances needed, if any.

Supplemental funding requests will be reviewed internally by NSF Program Officers. All supplements are subject to (a) the availability of funds, and (b) review of the quality of the supplemental funding request.

WHEN TO SUBMIT

Requests will be accepted until December 31, 2021. However, for consideration for funding in Fiscal Year 2021 (i.e., before October 1, 2021), requests should be received at NSF no later than June 1, 2021.

CONTACT

For further general information, please contact: EHRpostdocs@NSF.gov.

Sincerely,

Karen Marrongelle
Assistant Director, Education and Human Resources

¹ Based on the definition of an HSI as specified in section 502 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1101a; <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title20/html/USCODE-2011-title20-chap28-subchapV-partA-sec1101a.htm>).