



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE  
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

**NSF 21-085**

## Dear Colleague Letter: Research Experience for Post-Baccalaureate Students (REPS) in the Biological Sciences Supplemental Funding Opportunity

---

May 20, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

The National Science Foundation's (NSF) Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO) recognizes the importance of early-career research experiences, especially for individuals contemplating a career in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) research, and the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused on the career trajectories of undergraduate students who were denied such a research experience.

Many undergraduates who had been planning to participate in research experiences this past year—whether through Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) Sites, REU supplements, or individual arrangements with faculty mentors—found that their host labs or research settings were not able to accommodate them due to restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Students from underrepresented groups and those from schools with no access to research are particularly impacted, because such research experiences are often the only way that these individuals get exposure to the kinds of field-, computationally- and/or laboratory-based research that will motivate them to enter a STEM graduate program or career. Students who are still enrolled as undergraduates may have future opportunities to participate in an REU once pandemic restrictions relax. However, those who graduated and obtained their baccalaureate degrees are no longer eligible to participate as an REU student and, thus, may have been denied the valuable opportunity to engage in independent research. The purpose of this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) is to provide a mechanism to help fill this gap.

NSF BIO invites Principal Investigators (PI) of active awards to submit a supplemental funding request to support the research training of post-baccalaureate students. For the purposes of this DCL, a post-baccalaureate student is defined as an individual who has a bachelor's degree but is not currently enrolled in another degree program. The Research

Experience for Post-Baccalaureate Students (REPS) DCL encourages requests for supplemental funding to existing awards for the purpose of supporting research experiences for post-baccalaureate students who desire to engage in research or who want to pursue a career in STEM but were unable to have the opportunity to begin or complete a research experience as an undergraduate student due to pandemic-related interruptions. We expect that PIs will provide the REPS participants with an independent but guided research project and professional development to better prepare them for graduate education or entry into the workforce. Ideally, the REPS participants will be involved in the development of their research project. PIs are encouraged to use the resources available at their own institution or at <http://www.bioreu.org> to design a program that aims to develop further the participants' competency as a research scholar. At a minimum, PIs are expected to provide training in ethics and the responsible conduct of research and to inform participants of institutional policies or code of conduct on sexual harassment.

NSF BIO is particularly interested in increasing the participation of underrepresented groups in biological research and education such as women, persons with disabilities, underrepresented minorities [1][2], and those from geographically underrepresented areas in STEM. Proposals submitted in response to this DCL are strongly encouraged to substantively involve participants who are members of these groups. Proposers are also strongly encouraged to consider involving veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces as part of NSF's broader effort to promote veteran involvement in STEM research and education.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE OPPORTUNITY**

---

NSF BIO will consider supplemental funding requests for up to 12 months of participant support on active BIO-supported grants. Although participants are expected to do full time research, PIs should consider the individual needs of the participants so that they are able to balance their family or other obligations. Person-related participant support costs can include a stipend (recommended at \$650/week for full-time participation) and, as appropriate, fringe benefits, and travel. NSF expects that participant costs are included under the Participant Support costs category (Line F) in the budget. A modest amount for materials and supplies can be requested and should be included on line G1 in the budget. All costs should be clearly explained in the budget justification. Indirect costs should be calculated only on the amount listed on line G1. A supplemental funding request may include support for more than one student. However, PIs are reminded that there is limited funding for this program, and requests for more than one student should be justified.

The supplemental funding request should be submitted in FastLane in accordance with the guidelines found in the [PAPPG](#). The guidance below might be helpful in preparing the request.

- In the section entitled "Summary of Proposed Work," state that this is a REPS request

and provide brief information on the number of participants, the mentor names and potential projects, and professional development activities that will be part of the program. This section typically does not exceed one page.

- In the section entitled "Justification for Supplement," describe in detail the participant's involvement in the research project, a description of the potential project, the mentoring plan for the participant including any professional development activities, and information on the recruited participant, including a brief biographical sketch. Describe how the proposed program would contribute to the participants' long-term career goal and how the supplemental funding will serve to broaden participation.

REPS supplemental funding requests will be reviewed for funding consideration upon receipt. To receive full funding consideration for FY2021, requests should be submitted by **July 2, 2021**. Supplemental funding requests submitted after that date will be considered if funds are available.

Please direct any questions pertaining to this DCL to:

- Dr. Sally O'Connor, Program Director, Division of Biological Infrastructure, [soconnor@nsf.gov](mailto:soconnor@nsf.gov)
- Dr. Paulyn Cartwright, Program Director, Division of Integrative Organismal Systems, [pcartwri@nsf.gov](mailto:pcartwri@nsf.gov)
- Dr. Marcia Newcomer, Program Director, Division of Molecular and Cellular Biosciences, [mnewcome@nsf.gov](mailto:mnewcome@nsf.gov)
- Dr. Chris Balakrishnan, Program Director, Division of Environmental Biology, [cbalakri@nsf.gov](mailto:cbalakri@nsf.gov)

Sincerely,

Joanne S. Tornow  
Assistant Director  
Directorate for Biological Sciences