



**NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314**

NSF 21-088

Dear Colleague Letter: Envisioning the Future of NSF EPSCoR

May 21, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

The purpose of this letter is to announce a year-long visioning activity to guide the future of NSF's Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR), led by an external committee of national experts. We invite nominations for membership to the Committee on the Future of NSF EPSCoR. The Committee's efforts will include several opportunities for the public to provide input, culminating in a virtual community workshop to occur later in 2021.

The states, territories, and commonwealths served by NSF EPSCoR have made impressive advances in their efforts to achieve sustainable competitiveness in STEM research. The program continues to employ several investment strategies to advance its mission, helping to build a culture of research excellence across institutions and disciplines among its jurisdictional partners. However, while overall progress has been positive, evidence for the impact of specific program strategies is not always clear. Some jurisdictions have risen to a level of competitiveness such that they are no longer eligible for NSF EPSCoR support; others are making significant strides. But it can be challenging to measure the many improvements over the years in jurisdictional research competitiveness, and even more difficult to attribute them to specific strategic choices. At the same time, the landscape of issues facing the nation's STEM research and education enterprise continues to evolve, and novel strategies may be required for the program to continue to serve its jurisdictional partners most effectively.

NSF EPSCoR is undertaking a visioning process that will engage with its external stakeholder community to better understand the impacts of its investment strategies and identify new opportunities for increased success. This process provides an opportunity for NSF EPSCoR and its stakeholder community to deeply and collaboratively assess how the NSF program can work most effectively with its jurisdictional partners to achieve their shared goals in the context of the nation's changing STEM research landscape.

A Committee on the Future of NSF EPSCoR will guide this visioning process. The Committee

will be charged with reviewing materials provided by NSF EPSCoR staff, considering written community input, conducting listening sessions with key stakeholders, and ultimately synthesizing the collected input into a summary report. The success of this visioning process depends critically on thoughtful stakeholder input, and thus we encourage the participation of anyone interested in strengthening STEM research and education capacity across the United States.

The Committee's work and its engagements with the broader EPSCoR stakeholder community will be organized around two major motivating questions:

1. What does the available evidence tell us about the effectiveness of NSF EPSCoR's current investment strategies, both individually and collectively, in advancing scalable, jurisdiction-wide solutions and best practices to achieve the program's goals?
2. Based on the answers to the above, are there novel strategies or changes to the current strategies that would enable NSF EPSCoR and its jurisdictional partners to achieve its mission more effectively?

Work associated with the visioning activity will occur throughout 2021, with a final report expected by Spring 2022. The activity will include multiple opportunities for community input through written comments, targeted listening sessions, and a culminating virtual community workshop to occur in Fall 2021. A dedicated website has been established for the visioning activity: <https://beta.nsf.gov/envisioning-future-nsf-epscor>. Supporting information for the Committee's work will be updated continually throughout the year, including links to relevant information and details on specific community engagement events.

The Committee on the Future of NSF EPSCoR is expected to have 12-16 members, drawing broadly from the program's community of investigators, jurisdictional offices, and institutional research leadership, as well as others with expertise in building academic research capacity, advancing STEM inclusivity, and improving STEM workforce development. NSF EPSCoR intends for the Committee to represent a diversity of experiences within and outside of EPSCoR-eligible jurisdictions across the United States. Committee members will lead the planned listening sessions and the workshop and will hold several executive sessions associated with the development of the final report. All meetings associated with Future of NSF EPSCoR activities are expected to occur virtually.

Individuals interested in nominating potential members of the Committee on the Future of NSF EPSCoR are invited to submit the nominee's contact information via email to nsfepscor@nsf.gov, along with a brief statement of nomination. Interested individuals are welcome to self-nominate by the same process. Nominees (including self-nominees) will then be contacted to provide additional information, including 1) a brief (one-page maximum) statement describing the individual's interests and anticipated contributions to the success of the visioning activity, and 2) a CV, resume or biographical sketch highlighting the nominee's

relevant experience. Nominations are especially encouraged for individuals associated with groups or institution types that remain underrepresented in STEM. Submissions must be received by NSF EPSCoR no later than **June 7, 2021** to receive full consideration.

The Future of NSF EPSCoR visioning activity website (<https://beta.nsf.gov/envisioning-future-nsf-epscor>) will be updated frequently in the coming months to provide a shared informational resource about the Future of NSF EPSCoR planning and action items, including details about the listening sessions and virtual community workshop to be held later this year.

The website includes a link to [subscribe to email updates](#) about the Future of NSF EPSCoR visioning activity. Interested parties are encouraged to subscribe to receive information about website updates, planned events, and opportunities to participate in the visioning process.

The Committee on the Future of NSF EPSCoR will operate as a subcommittee to NSF's Committee on Equal Opportunities in Science and Engineering (CEOSE). The Committee's report will be submitted to CEOSE for review and deliberation.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Iacono
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