



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE  
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

## NSF 21-094

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Launching Early-Career Academic Pathways in the Mathematical and Physical Sciences (LEAPS-MPS) [NSF 21-570](#)

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## GENERAL TO ALL:

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1. How can I indicate which MPS Division funds the type of research that would be supported in this proposal?

## BUDGET

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2. Can undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdocs be supported on a LEAPS award?
3. Can a LEAPS award be used for course reduction?
4. Can a LEAPS award be used for summer salary?
5. Can a LEAPS award be used to pay for travel?
6. Can a LEAPS award be used for equipment?
7. Can a LEAPS award be transferred to another institution if the Principal Investigator moves during the time of the award?

## PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR ELIGIBILITY

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8. Must the Principal Investigator be in the tenure track or equivalent position at the time of submission?
9. What NSF awards are considered exceptions?
10. What positions would be considered tenure-track equivalent?
11. Must the start date of the tenure-track position be before or on the LEAPS proposal deadline?
12. Are visa-holders eligible?

13. Can a Principal Investigator submit proposals to LEAPS-MPS and CAREER in the same cycle? Should the topic(s) be different?
14. Can a Principal Investigator submit a proposal to LEAPS if they have another award pending/still under consideration at NSF?
15. Can a Principal Investigator submit a proposal to LEAPS if they have grants from other agencies/organizations?
16. What if the Principal Investigator receives tenure during the LEAPS award period?

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#### **INSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS**

17. Will Principal Investigators at Carnegie Research 1 (R1) that are Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) be considered?
18. Will Carnegie Research 1 (R1s) that are not MSIs be considered?
19. What should be in the institutional letter of support?
20. In the proposal, should the focus be on improving the whole institution, or the Principal Investigator's department?

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#### **OTHER TOPICS**

21. Is educational research supported?
22. Will proposals be evaluated at the MPS level? Or within the MPS Divisions?
23. What if a proposed research program is interdisciplinary and crosses more than one MPS/NSF division?
24. Will additional consideration be given to proposals from Principal Investigators who identify as members of one of the listed underrepresented groups?

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#### **GENERAL TO ALL:**

1. **How can I indicate which MPS Division funds the type of research that would be supported in this proposal?**

When submitting the proposal, you will be asked for the program Solicitation Number. Select the LEAPS-MPS 21-570 solicitation. Then for the NSF Unit of Consideration, select Office of Multidisciplinary Activities as the primary unit within MPS. As a secondary unit of consideration, choose the most appropriate Division and program that would fund this type of research. In some cases, there may be only one choice open as

a secondary unit of consideration in a particular Division. In that case, please choose that one choice as the appropriate program. This will help us sort the proposal when they arrive at NSF.

## BUDGET

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**2. Can undergraduate students, graduate students, and postdocs be supported on a LEAPS award?**

Yes.

**3. Can a LEAPS award be used for course reduction?**

Please consult with the cognizant Program Officer in the Division that would potentially support the planned research. See the [LEAPS-MPS program page](#) for contact information.

**4. Can a LEAPS award be used for summer salary?**

Yes, the Principal Investigator (PI) and senior personnel (if any) can each request up to two months of their regular salary in any one year.

**5. Can a LEAPS award be used to pay for travel?**

Yes.

**6. Can a LEAPS award be used for equipment?**

- a. Yes, but equipment acquisition should not be the focus of the award. There are a number of solicitations specifically aimed at developing new technologies and instrumentation and if interested in one of those funding opportunities, please contact the cognizant Program Officer to discuss.
- b. Principal Investigators interested in major equipment acquisition or development might consider the NSF Major Research Instrumentation program: [https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=5260](https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5260). Please see the solicitation for details. Institutional submission limits apply.

**7. Can a LEAPS award be transferred to another institution if the Principal Investigator moves during the time of the award?**

See Chapter VII.B.2.f of the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)* for details and guidance and contact the cognizant Program Officer to discuss.

## PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR ELIGIBILITY

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**8. Must the Principal Investigator be in the tenure track or equivalent position at the time of submission?**

As specified in the solicitation, the PI must be "a new investigator, i.e., in the pre-tenure period, at the time of submission, as a tenure-track faculty member in a U.S. IHE eligible to receive NSF support"

**9. What NSF awards are considered exceptions?**

- a. As listed in the solicitation, individuals who served as Principal Investigators, co-Principal Investigators, and senior personnel on Fellowship, Conference/Workshop, Equipment, Travel and Instrumentation awards are eligible to submit proposals to the LEAPS-MPS program. More specifically, this includes awards made through the Major Research Instrumentation program, Campus Cyberinfrastructure awards made through the Office of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure, awards whose primary focus is to support a conference or workshop, unpaid senior personnel (mentors) in Research Experience for Undergraduate (REU) awards, Extreme Science and Engineering Discovery Environment (XSEDE) awards for computational time, and Fellowship awards. Other similar types of awards (those that do not support research) may also be exceptions. Please contact the cognizant Program Officer to check if questions remain.
- b. Is a Principal Investigator eligible if they were senior personnel on another NSF research award?
  - i. No, with rare exceptions (see above).

**10. What positions would be considered tenure-track equivalent?**

The submitting institution must determine whether the position is tenure track equivalent.

**11. Must the start date of the tenure-track position be before or on the LEAPS proposal deadline?**

Yes.

**12. Are visa-holders eligible?**

No. Per the solicitation, individuals are eligible to serve as PI only if they are a citizen, national or legally admitted permanent resident of the United States.

**13. Can a Principal Investigator submit proposals to LEAPS-MPS and CAREER in the same cycle? Should the topic(s) be different?**

Yes, a Principal Investigator may submit in the same cycle. Each proposal should be listed as Pending Support within the other proposal's Current and Pending Support section. The PI should talk with the cognizant Program Officer in the core program that would be evaluating the CAREER proposal to assess the degree to which the proposals overlap.

**14. Can a Principal Investigator submit a proposal to LEAPS if they have another award pending/still under consideration at NSF?**

Yes. However, please note that the priority of LEAPS-MPS is to support new investigators with no research funding.

**15. Can a Principal Investigator submit a proposal to LEAPS if they have grants from other agencies/organizations?**

LEAPS awards are intended to support MPS principal investigators in launching their research careers such that LEAPS-MPS awards are followed by competitive CAREER or individual-investigator grant submissions. An individual with funding from another agency is eligible to submit. All proposers should demonstrate why this award is critical to help initiate their research programs.

**16. What if the Principal Investigator receives tenure during the LEAPS award period?**

Eligibility is determined at the time of the solicitation deadline. Once an award is made, changes in tenure status will not affect the award in place.

## **INSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS**

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**17. Will Principal Investigators at Carnegie Research 1 (R1) that are Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) be considered?**

Yes, although a Principal Investigator at any R1 will need to strongly justify the potential impact of the award.

**18. Will Carnegie Research 1 (R1s) that are not MSIs be considered?**

Yes, although a Principal Investigator at any R1 will need to strongly justify the potential impact of the award.

**19. What should be in the institutional letter of support?**

The letter of institutional support (from a department chair or dean) should summarize the availability of facilities and other resources supporting the proposed activities.

**20. In the proposal, should the focus be on improving the whole institution, or the Principal Investigator's department?**

The specifics of the Broadening Participation plan will vary between proposals but should focus on broadening the participation of members of underrepresented groups within MPS fields as described in the solicitation.

**OTHER TOPICS**

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**21. Is educational research supported?**

No. The proposal must describe research within the scope of topic areas covered by the five MPS Divisions, which are: Astronomical Sciences (AST), Chemistry (CHE), Materials Research (DMR), Mathematical Sciences (DMS), and Physics (PHY).

**22. Will proposals be evaluated at the MPS level? Or within the MPS Divisions?**

All proposals must be submitted to the MPS Office of Multidisciplinary Activities (OMA). However, proposals will be evaluated within the most appropriate MPS Division. Please see Question One at the top of this FAQ document for instructions on how to indicate the most appropriate MPS program within the most appropriate Division for your research area.

**23. What if a proposed research program is interdisciplinary and crosses more than one MPS/NSF division?**

Interdisciplinary projects that connect MPS areas to other disciplines and sub-fields not within the purview of MPS may also be considered. However, the bulk of the effort must fall within one of the areas within the purview of MPS.

**24. Will additional consideration be given to proposals from Principal Investigators who identify as members of one of the listed underrepresented groups?**

There is no criterion that the Principal Investigator be a member of an underrepresented group, although members of such groups are strongly encouraged to submit.