

# Campus Cyberinfrastructure (CC\*)

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## PROGRAM SOLICITATION

NSF 21-528

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## REPLACES DOCUMENT(S):

NSF 20-507

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**National Science Foundation**

Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering  
Office of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure  
Division of Computer and Network Systems

**Full Proposal Deadline(s)** (due by 5 p.m. submitter's local time):

March 01, 2021

October 11, 2021

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND REVISION NOTES

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This solicitation updates the Campus Cyberinfrastructure (CC\*) solicitation [NSF 20-507](#). The CC\* program continues to support cyberinfrastructure (CI) needs at the campus level. This solicitation:

- Modifies each Program Area of the solicitation, primarily by providing a summary of requirements for each area; and
- Removes Program Area #5: Cyber Team - Research and Education CI-based Regional Facilitation.

Any proposal submitted in response to this solicitation should be submitted in accordance with the revised *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) ([NSF 20-1](#)), which is effective for proposals submitted, or due, on or after June 1, 2020.

## SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

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### General Information

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**Program Title:**

Campus Cyberinfrastructure (CC\*)

**Synopsis of Program:**

The Campus Cyberinfrastructure (CC\*) program invests in coordinated campus-level networking and cyberinfrastructure improvements, innovation, integration, and engineering for science applications and distributed research projects. Learning and workforce development (LWD) in cyberinfrastructure is explicitly addressed in the program. Science-driven requirements are the primary motivation for any proposed activity.

**Cognizant Program Officer(s):**

*Please note that the following information is current at the time of publishing. See program website for any updates to the points of contact.*

- Kevin L. Thompson, Program Director, CISE/OAC, telephone: (703) 292-4220, email: [kthomps@nsf.gov](mailto:kthomps@nsf.gov)
- Deepankar (Deep) Medhi, Program Director, CISE/CNS, telephone: (703) 292-8950, email: [dmedhi@nsf.gov](mailto:dmedhi@nsf.gov)

**Applicable Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):**

- 47.070 --- Computer and Information Science and Engineering

### Award Information

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**Anticipated Type of Award:** Standard Grant or Continuing Grant

## Estimated Number of Awards: 24 to 46

The estimated number of awards per program area is as follows: 4-8 Data-Driven Networking Infrastructure awards; 3-8 Regional Connectivity for Small Institutions awards; 5-8 Network Integration and Applied Innovation awards; 8-14 Campus Computing and the Computing Continuum awards; and 4-8 Planning Grants and CI-Research Alignment awards.

## Anticipated Funding Amount: \$13,000,000 to \$15,000,000

pending availability of funds and quality of proposals received.

Each program area will support awards pursuant to the following budget and duration:

1. Data-Driven Networking Infrastructure for the Campus and Researcher awards will be supported at up to \$500,000 total for up to 2 years;
2. Regional Connectivity for Small Institutions of Higher Education awards will be supported at up to \$1,000,000 total for up to 2 years;
3. Network Integration and Applied Innovation awards will be supported at up to \$1,000,000 total for up to 2 years [in some cases these awards are limited to \$500,000 total—see program area (3) in Section II. Program Description];
4. Campus Computing and the Computing Continuum awards will be supported at up to \$400,000 total for up to 2 years; and
5. Planning Grants and CI-Research Alignment awards will be supported for up to \$200,000 total for up to two years [in some cases, these awards are limited to \$100,000 total—see program area (5) in Section II. Program Description].

## Eligibility Information

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### Who May Submit Proposals:

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) - Two- and four-year IHEs (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in the US, acting on behalf of their faculty members. Special Instructions for International Branch Campuses of US IHEs: If the proposal includes funding to be provided to an international branch campus of a US institution of higher education (including through use of subawards and consultant arrangements), the proposer must explain the benefit(s) to the project of performance at the international branch campus, and justify why the project activities cannot be performed at the US campus.
- Non-profit, non-academic organizations: Independent museums, observatories, research labs, professional societies and similar organizations in the U.S. associated with educational or research activities.

### Who May Serve as PI:

There are no restrictions or limits.

### Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:

There are no restrictions or limits.

### Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or Co-PI:

There are no restrictions or limits.

## Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions

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### A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

- **Letters of Intent:** Not required
- **Preliminary Proposal Submission:** Not required
- **Full Proposals:**
  - Full Proposals submitted via FastLane: *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) guidelines apply. The complete text of the PAPPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).
  - Full Proposals submitted via Research.gov: *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) guidelines apply. The complete text of the PAPPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).
  - Full Proposals submitted via Grants.gov: *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov* guidelines apply (Note: The *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide* is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=grantsgovguide](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide)).

### B. Budgetary Information

- **Cost Sharing Requirements:**

Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.
- **Indirect Cost (F&A) Limitations:**

Not Applicable
- **Other Budgetary Limitations:**

Not Applicable

### C. Due Dates

- **Full Proposal Deadline(s)** (due by 5 p.m. submitter's local time):

March 01, 2021

October 11, 2021

## Proposal Review Information Criteria

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### Merit Review Criteria:

National Science Board approved criteria. Additional merit review criteria apply. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.

## Award Administration Information

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### Award Conditions:

Standard NSF award conditions apply.

### Reporting Requirements:

Standard NSF reporting requirements apply.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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Campuses today face challenges across multiple levels of cyberinfrastructure (CI), where meeting the needs of scientific research and education goes far beyond the networking layer in capacity and services, and extends to computing, data services, secure and trustworthy systems, and especially human expertise, collaboration and knowledge sharing. Recognition of the "data driven" nature of scientific advancement and discovery has led to an increased focus in addressing the data challenges posed by the NSF research and education community.

In recent years, NSF has addressed the growing requirements of the NSF community, and opportunities to innovate, in networking infrastructure through the CC\* program, which invests in innovative, coordinated, and secure campus, multi-campus and multi-institution CI components. The Campus Cyberinfrastructure-Network Infrastructure and Engineering (CC-NIE) program in 2012 and 2013 focused on campus networking upgrades and re-architecting, and innovative development and integration of new networking capabilities in support of driving scientific application requirements. Subsequent years saw the program expand beyond data networking to address a broader set of CI needs at the campus level, including computing, storage, multi-institution integrated CI, and learning and workforce development.

The CC\* solicitation invests in coordinated campus-level networking and cyberinfrastructure improvements, innovation, integration, and engineering for science applications and distributed research projects. Science-driven requirements are the primary motivation for any proposed activity.

CC\* awards will be supported in five program areas:

1. Data-Driven Networking Infrastructure for the Campus and Researcher awards will be supported at up to \$500,000 total for up to 2 years;
2. Regional Connectivity for Small Institutions of Higher Education awards will be supported at up to \$1,000,000 total for up to 2 years;
3. Network Integration and Applied Innovation awards will be supported at up to \$1,000,000 total for up to 2 years [in some cases, these awards are limited to \$500,000 total—see program area (3) in Section II. Program Description];
4. Campus Computing and the Computing Continuum awards will be supported at up to \$400,000 total for up to 2 years; and
5. Planning Grants and CI-Research Alignment awards will be supported at up to \$200,000 total for up to 2 years [in some cases these awards are limited to \$100,000 total—see program area (5) in Section II. Program Description].

In FY 2020, the program was aligned with NSF's vision for a holistic CI ecosystem outlined in "Transforming Science Through Cyberinfrastructure: NSF's Blueprint for a National Cyberinfrastructure Ecosystem for Science and Engineering in the 21st Century" (see <https://www.nsf.gov/cise/oac/vision/blueprint-2019/>). Key changes focused on the aggregation and integration of CI investments at the campus level, with the goal of helping campuses drive toward a 21st-century realization of an integrated CI for enabling science. Program area (1) continues to address science-driven needs in data networking intra-campus, and externally. Area (2) repeats that core theme of networking improvements, with a specific emphasis on supporting the needs of multiple under-resourced campuses through partnerships with regional entities and small institutions with experience in high-performance Research & Education (R&E) networking. Area (3) goes beyond networking infrastructure investments in areas (1) and (2) by leveraging the campus network as a compelling environment on which to develop and deploy new networking capabilities reflecting applied research and development in networking. Area (4) builds on the networking capability foundation established in the first three areas. It recognizes both the research computing needs at a campus level, and the largely untapped potential to share unused compute cycles and resources across the entire academic fabric of highly connected and increasingly resourced campuses. Areas (3) and (4) reflect NSF's goal of democratization and broadening participation in scientific networking and computing. Area (5) supports planning and coordination, in part reflecting the challenges for institutions that presently do not participate in the R&E network fabric and community.

## II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### Program-wide Criteria

Science-driven requirements are the primary motivation for any proposed activity. Proposals will be evaluated on the strength of the science enabled (including research and education) as drivers for investment and innovation in data networking infrastructure, innovation, and engineering.

A common theme across all aspects of the CC\* program is the critical importance of the partnership among campus-level CI experts, including the campus Information Technology (IT)/networking/data organization, contributing domain scientists, research groups, and educators necessary to engage in, and drive, new networking capabilities and approaches in support of scientific discovery. Proposals across the program should reflect and demonstrate this partnership on campus. Proposals will be evaluated on the strength of institutional partnerships, as they are expected to play a central role in developing and implementing the eventual network and data infrastructure upgrades.

**All proposals submitted to the CC\* program, with the exception of area (5), must include a Campus CI plan within which the proposed CI improvements are conceived, designed, and implemented in the context of a coherent campus-wide strategy and approach to CI that is integrated horizontally intra- campus and vertically with regional and national CI investments and best practices.** This Campus CI plan must be included as a Supplementary Document and is limited to no more than 5 pages.

Further, proposals are expected to address within the Campus CI plan the sustainability of the proposed work in terms of ongoing operational and engineering costs. Since security and resilience are fundamental issues in campus CI, the Campus CI plan should address the campus-wide approach to cybersecurity in the scientific research and education infrastructure, including the campus approach to data and privacy. Campuses are encouraged to consider emerging best practices in network routing security for network operators as expressed in the Mutually Agreed Norms for Routing Security (see <https://www.manrs.org>). The plan should include the campus status and plans with respect to federated identity and specifically InCommon, including: if the campus is registered with InCommon as supporting the Research and Scholarship (R&S) Entity Category to streamline integration with research applications (see <https://spaces.internet2.edu/display/InCFederation/Research+and+Scholarship+Category>); and if the campus meets the InCommon Baseline Expectations for Trust in Federation (see <https://spaces.at.internet2.edu/display/BE?preview=164988631/175965279/TI.34.2-BaselineExpectations-v2-2020-11.pdf>). The plan should also describe campus IPv6 deployment.

The website, <http://fasterdata.es.net/campusCIplanning/> offers a number of Campus CI plans provided by existing CC\* program awardees as examples. Proposals addressing a multi-institution or regional activity and approach to coordinated and integrated CI may submit a Campus CI plan representing the multi-institution group or region.

All proposals submitted to CC\* are expected to address the relevant cybersecurity issues and challenges related to their proposed activities. Depending on the type of proposal, these issues may include, but are not limited to: data integrity, privacy, network security measures, federated access and identity management, and infrastructure monitoring.

As a campus CI program, funded activities should represent ongoing opportunities for student engagement, education, and training. Proposals that demonstrate opportunities to engage students directly in the deployment, operation, and advancement of the CI funded activities, consistent with the required Campus CI plan, are encouraged. Note that NSF encourages Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) supplement proposals on active awards as well.

### Program Areas

The CC\* program welcomes proposals in five program areas: (1) Data-Driven Networking Infrastructure for the Campus and Researcher; (2) Regional Connectivity for Small Institutions of Higher Education; (3) Network Integration and Applied Innovation; (4) Campus Computing and the Computing Continuum; and (5) Planning Grants and CI-Research Alignment. These are described in detail below.

#### (1) Data-Driven Networking Infrastructure for the Campus and Researcher

Proposals submitted to this area should address network infrastructure improvements at the campus level to enable national and global high-performance end-to-end access to dynamic network services that in turn enable rapid, unimpeded movement of diverse and distributed scientific data sets and advanced computing. These networking improvements include, but are not limited to, the following types of activities:

- Network upgrades within a campus network to support a wide range of science data flows (including large files, distributed data, sensor networks, real-time data sources, and virtualized instruments for computer systems research);

- Re-architecting a campus network to support large science data flows, for example, by designing and building a Science DMZ (see <http://fasterdata.es.net/science-dmz/> for more information on the Science DMZ approach); and/or
- A network connection upgrade for the campus connection to a regional optical exchange or point-of-presence that connects to a state/regional/national network aggregation point prioritizing support for research and education.

Proposals may wish to consider the application of new wireless technologies as an element of their engineering solution to network-based challenges in enabling scientific research and education on their campus. For example, include multi-gigabit or environment-constrained technologies to connect new instrumentation, resources, or communities relevant to the proposing institution. Note that any wireless solution proposed should address research and education needs as the singular priority, as opposed to a general campus wireless network.

Proposals in this area are required to present a complete technical solution, with complete equipment specifications. Full equipment quotes are required and should be provided in the Supplementary Document section.

Proposals must address scientific and engineering projects and their research needs and must include application drivers that require network engineering or upgrades of their existing infrastructure. Proposals must also present project specific end-to-end scenarios for data movement, distributed computing, and other end-to-end services driving the networking upgrade. Access to research and education resources external to the campus, including cloud computing resources, is also within scope. Proposals are strongly encouraged to include a quantitative element, for example, providing current or historical data flow rates, in their descriptions of data movement scenarios and use cases. Proposals are encouraged to justify equipment choices based on the needs of the science drivers and workflows.

Proposals should consider expected outcomes; they should explain the compelling need for proposed network improvements in light of the current state of the networking infrastructure, and the expected benefits to the identified science drivers and applications of the proposed improvements. All of the above elements should be included in the Project Description. Inclusion of itemized vendor quotes is required for all proposals in this program area and should be included as a Supplementary Document.

Proposals must include a summary table of the science drivers and their network requirements in the Project Description; these requirements may be specified in terms of throughput ranges or as part of a composition or workflow profile for repeating cycles of scientific data movement.

Proposals must also include a Project Plan addressing clear project goals and milestones resulting in a working system in the target environment in the Project Description. Proposals are encouraged to address end-to-end networking performance in considering metrics of success.

All proposals in this area must document explicit partnerships or collaborations with the campus IT/networking organization, as well as one or more domain scientists, research groups, and educators in need of the new network capabilities. Partnership documentation from personnel not included in the proposal as PI, co-PI, or Senior Personnel should be in the form of a letter of collaboration located in the Supplementary Documents section of the proposal.

Any budget request for professional services, such as IT staff support, must be documented in coordination with the institution's campus IT or CIO organization. Note that requests for significant human resources are not encouraged.

Budgets are expected to reflect a network-based upgrade. Proposals with budgets dominated by non-networking equipment are strongly discouraged. Proposals may include nominal configurations for a Data Transfer Node (DTN) as part of their Science DMZ designs; however, the DTN component should be less than 15% of the overall budget. Compute resources should not be included in the budget unless they are an integrated component of the DTN platform. See area (4) below for a direct science-driven funding opportunity in campus cluster computing.

Proposals are required to include a network management plan addressing responsibilities, support, and roles in the Project Description. The plan should spell out how science data flows will be supported. A letter of support from a campus leader is strongly encouraged and should address sustainability and commitment from the institution.

Target environments must be campus infrastructure residing within the U.S.

**Proposals are required to include a network diagram of the proposed network upgrades. Proposals missing a network diagram in the Project Description will be returned without review.** Proposals are encouraged to document current utilization in the context of the proposed upgrades.

Proposals are encouraged to describe project efforts to provide training and support for users.

Proposals are encouraged to engage community knowledge and expertise for relevant technical areas of proposal development. In addressing relevant security considerations in the proposed design, proposals are encouraged to reference the Energy Science Network's (ESnet) design guidance for the Science DMZ, including this element: "Security policies and enforcement mechanisms that are tailored for high performance science environments." ESnet provides more detailed guidance on security considerations in the design of the Science DMZ at: <https://fasterdata.es.net/science-dmz/science-dmz-security/> In addressing networking equipment choices and configurations matched for high-performance R&E networking environments, proposals are encouraged to leverage objective community expertise and experience available from the NSF-funded EPOC project at: <https://epoc.global/cc/>.

Preference will be given to proposals describing an operational role for IPv6, for example, describing native IPv6 support for one or more specific science applications. Proposals are expected to describe an approach to end-to-end network performance measurement based on the PerfSonar framework with associated tool installation and use; proposals may describe an alternative approach to PerfSonar with sufficient justification.

Proposers are strongly encouraged to engage with their relevant state or regional research and education optical network entity. Most of these entities are members of a national organization called Quilt and can be found here: <http://thequilt.net/>.

Proposers are encouraged to reference the following community website for more information on PerfSonar: <https://fasterdata.es.net/performance-testing/perfsonar/>.

An award in this program area is not the appropriate mechanism to provide support for individual faculty research projects. Requests for support of such projects should be directed to NSF's research grant programs.

Additional proposal preparation guidance for this area can be found in Section V.A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

**Only Institutions of Higher Education are eligible to submit proposals in this program area. Current and previous awardees in this area are not eligible to apply to this area. Any proposal received from an organization having already received an award in this area will be returned without review.**

Proposals in this area are required to have titles that begin with "CC\* Networking Infrastructure:" followed by the title of the project.

Summary of area (1) requirements:

- Proposals are required to present a complete technical solution, with complete equipment specifications. Full equipment quotes are required and should be provided as Supplementary Documentation.
- Proposals must address scientific and engineering projects and their research needs and must include application drivers that require network engineering or upgrades of their existing infrastructure.
- Proposals must present project specific end-to-end scenarios for data movement, distributed computing, and other end-to-end services driving the networking upgrade.
- Proposals must include a summary table of the science drivers and their network requirements in the Project Description.
- Proposals must include a Project Plan addressing clear project goals and milestones resulting in a working system in the target environment in the Project Description.
- All proposals in this area must document explicit partnerships or collaborations with the campus IT/networking organization, as well as one or more domain scientists, research groups, and educators in need of the new network capabilities.
- Any budget request for professional services, such as IT staff support, must be documented in coordination with the institution's campus IT or CIO organization.
- Proposals are required to include a network management plan addressing responsibilities, support, and roles in the Project Description.
- Target environments must be campus infrastructure residing within the U.S.
- Proposals are required to include a network diagram of the proposed network upgrades.
- Proposals are required to include a Campus CI plan as a Supplementary Document, limited to no more than 5 pages (see Section II. Program-wide Criteria above for more information).
- Only Institutions of Higher Education are eligible to submit proposals in this program area. Current and previous awardees in this area are not eligible to apply to this area.
- Proposals in this area are required to have titles that begin with "CC\* Networking Infrastructure:" followed by the title of the project.

## (2) Regional Connectivity for Small Institutions of Higher Education

This area supports broadening participation and significantly widening the set of institutions connected to the regional and national research and education network fabric. This area specifically targets groups of smaller institutions with fundamental challenges in networking infrastructure and resources. This area supports increased research and education (R&E) network connectivity across smaller institutions coordinated and led by a Regional Optical Network (RON) or a leadership institution in R&E networking in the region.

**This area solicits proposals led by established regional and state R&E data networks and data network-based consortia.** Example entities are listed as members of the national regional networks consortium called the Quilt (see <https://www.thequilt.net/about-us/the-quilt-participants/>). For areas of the US without a state or regional level coordinating entity and associated structure and network infrastructure, proposals will be accepted from self-declared leadership universities. **An institution may also lead a proposal in regions with an established RON with documented coordination with the RON.**

**Proposals are required to address campus networking needs spanning multiple under-resourced institutions. Proposals addressing a single institution are not allowed to submit to this area and will be returned without review.** Proposals may choose to apply an alternative design framework to the conventional single institution context in Area (1) and consider an aggregation model where some or all associated resources and services (e.g., Science DMZ) are centralized at a regional level.

Proposals submitted to this area must address scientific research and education needs driving the proposed improvements in R&E networking connectivity on campus and/or externally.

Proposals may focus on upgrading an institution's connectivity to the national research and education community and/or point to a need to redesign their campus network to better support academic data flows, such as the Science DMZ approach (see <http://fasterdata.es.net/science-dmz/> for more information). Connectivity solutions between R&E buildings and sites are also in scope. Proposals are encouraged to leverage objective community expertise and experience in high-performance networking equipment and configurations available from the NSF-funded EPOC project at: <https://epoc.global/cc/>.

Proposals in this area should focus on establishing their institutions' science research and education needs and aspirations and discuss how that translates to the need for greater connectedness and investment in network capacity. Institutions whose missions are primarily education-focused may choose to present their scientific needs in the context of network-enabled education activities and distance education. Proposals are encouraged to discuss research and education drivers with specific descriptions of these drivers. Access to research and education resources external to the campus, including cloud computing resources, is also within scope.

Proposals may wish to consider the application of new wireless technologies as an element of their engineering approach to network-based challenges in enabling scientific research and education—this may include, for example, multi-gigabit or environment-constrained technologies to connect campuses in rural areas, or existing campus networks to new instrumentation, resources, or communities relevant to the proposing institution. Note that any wireless solution proposed should address research and education needs as the singular priority, as opposed to a general campus wireless network.

Proposals in this area are required to present a complete technical solution, with complete equipment specifications. Full equipment quotes are required and should be provided as Supplementary Documentation.

Proposals are expected to address coordination activities with the participating small institutions by planning for one or more meeting events starting in year 1.

Proposals may include equipment and resources targeted for the state or regional network infrastructure. It is expected that such investments will be justified in the proposal in the context of needed improvements at the state and regional aggregation level in order to support the target institutions' external connectivity regionally, nationally, and globally for enabling R&E collaborations.

The lead proposing entity is expected to be experienced in high-performance R&E networking and to be well-resourced and capable of actively working with the participating institutions on designing and implementing the proposed networking improvements. The partnering institutions' engagement activities may be supported in the proposal and may be included as subawards.

**Proposals will be evaluated mainly on the strength of the science research and education use cases presented, quantification of those use cases, and how the use cases relate to the proposed networking upgrades.** Proposals will also be evaluated on the strength of institutional partnerships as they are expected to play a central role in developing and implementing the eventual network upgrades.

Proposals are required to provide a summary table of the science drivers and their network requirements in the Project Description. These requirements may be specified in terms of throughput ranges or as part of a composition or workflow profile for repeating cycles of scientific data movement.

Proposals are required to include, in the Project Description, a conceptual or functional network diagram of the proposed network upgrades and are encouraged to include the context of end system and user connectivity. Proposals are encouraged to document current utilization in the context of the proposed upgrades.

Proposals must include, in the Project Description, a Project Plan addressing clear goals and milestones resulting in a working system in the target environment. The Project Plan should include the role of a Project Manager function with duties reflecting the coordination challenges of multi-institutional physical networking upgrades. Proposals are encouraged to address end-to-end networking performance in considering metrics of success.

All proposals in this area must document explicit partnerships or collaborations with the participating campus' IT/networking organizations, as well as one or more domain scientists, research groups, and educators in need of the new network capabilities. Partnership documentation from personnel not included in the proposal as PI, coPI, or Senior Personnel should be in the form of a letter of collaboration located in the Supplementary Documents section of the proposal.

Proposals are encouraged to describe an approach to end-to-end network performance measurement based on the PerfSonar framework with associated tool installation and use; proposals may describe an alternative approach to PerfSonar with sufficient justification. Proposers are encouraged to reference the following community website for more information on PerfSonar: <https://fasterdata.es.net/performance-testing/perfsonar/>.

Any budget request for professional services at the campus level, such as IT staff support, must be documented in coordination with the institutions' campus IT or CIO organizations. The proposing entity may choose to include technical staff support required to carry out the work.

Budgets are expected to reflect network-based upgrades. Proposals with budgets dominated by non-networking equipment are strongly discouraged. Proposals may include nominal configurations for a Data Transfer Node (DTN) as part of their Science DMZ designs; however, the DTN component should be less than 15% of the overall budget. Compute resources should be included in the budget unless they are an integrated component of the DTN platform. See area (4) below for funding opportunities in campus cluster computing.

Proposals are required to include, in the Project Description, a network management plan addressing responsibilities, support, and roles. The plan should spell out how science data flows will be supported.

Target environments must be campus infrastructure residing within the U.S.

**Proposals are required to include a network diagram of the proposed network upgrades. Proposals missing a network diagram in the Project Description will be returned without review.** Proposals are strongly encouraged to include detailed and legible campus network diagrams for each participating institution "before" and "after" the proposed efforts. These diagrams may be included as Supplementary Documents.

Proposals are encouraged to document current utilization in the context of the proposed upgrades.

If a proposal chooses to discuss design of a proposed Science DMZ, NSF encourages adoption of guidance found on the ESnet website as referenced above.

Proposals are encouraged to engage community knowledge and expertise for relevant technical areas of proposal development. In addressing relevant security considerations in the proposed design, proposals are encouraged to reference ESnet's design guidance for the Science DMZ, including this element: "Security policies and enforcement mechanisms that are tailored for high performance science environments." ESnet provides more detailed guidance on security considerations in the design of the Science DMZ at: <https://fasterdata.es.net/science-dmz/science-dmz-security/>. In addressing networking equipment choices and configurations matched for high-performance R&E networking environments, proposals are encouraged to leverage objective community expertise and experience available from the NSF-funded EPOC project at: <https://epoc.global/cc/>.

A letter of support from a campus leader at each participating campus is encouraged and should address sustainability and commitment from each participating institution.

An award in this program area is not the appropriate mechanism to provide support for individual faculty research projects. Requests for support of such projects should be directed to NSF's research grant programs.

Additional proposal preparation guidance for this area can be found in Section V.A. Proposal Preparation Instructions.

Institutions of Higher Education and Non-profit, Non-academic Organizations are eligible to submit proposals in this program area.

Proposals in this area are required to have titles that begin with "CC\* Regional:" followed by the title of the project.

Summary of area (2) requirements:

- Proposals are required to address campus networking needs spanning multiple under-resourced institutions.
- Proposals are required to address scientific research and education needs driving the proposed improvements in R&E networking connectivity on campus and/or externally.
- Proposals are required to present a complete technical solution, with complete equipment specifications. Full equipment quotes are required and should be provided as supplementary documentation.
- Proposals are required to provide a summary table of the science drivers and their network requirements in the Project Description.
- Proposals must include a Project Plan addressing clear project goals and milestones resulting in a working system in the target environment in the Project Description.
- All proposals in this area must document explicit partnerships or collaborations with the campus IT/networking organization, as well as one or more domain scientists, research groups, and educators in need of the new network capabilities.
- Any budget request for professional services, such as IT staff support, must be documented in coordination with the institution's campus IT or CIO organization.
- Proposals are required to include a network management plan addressing responsibilities, support, and roles in the Project Description.
- Target environments must be campus infrastructure residing within the U.S.
- Proposals are required to include a Campus CI plan as a Supplementary Document, limited to no more than 5 pages (see Section II. Program-wide Criteria above for more information).
- Proposals are required to include a network diagram of the proposed network upgrades.
- Proposals in this area are required to have titles that begin with "CC\* Regional:" followed by the title of the project.

### (3) Network Integration and Applied Innovation

This program area supports end-to-end network CI through integration of existing and new technologies and applied innovation. The goal is to take advantage of research results, prototypes, and emerging innovations to use them to enable specified researchers in a networking context. Proposals in this area may leverage new and existing investments in network infrastructure, services, and tools by combining or extending capabilities to work as part of the CI environment used by scientific applications and users.

Proposals in this area are expected to reflect innovation in advanced networking. As a result, this area is not appropriate for projects whose costs are dominated by equipment purchases.

Proposals in this area support the development and integration of innovative networking capabilities and network-related software development, and deployment activities resulting in an operational environment prototype are expected to be part of the proposed activities.

A broad range of activities is covered by this area, including but not limited to:

- Integration of networking protocols and technologies with science application layer processes and workflows, for instance, for large-scale shared scientific datasets and/or large-scale remote computational resources;
- Transition of successful research prototypes in Software-Defined Networking (SDN) and wireless networking technologies to distributed scientific environments and campus infrastructure;
- Applications of networking hardware and software developed on NSF FutureCloud facilities (e.g., ChameleonCloud and CloudLab), including the integration of new technologies such as programmable network interfaces;
- Networking solutions exploiting virtualization, distributed computing and Software-Defined Infrastructure (SDI), including cloud services and direct campus-to-cloud connections;
- Innovative research prototypes integrating programmable packet processing components into campus infrastructure or exploring applications of software-defined data planes in support of high-performance data distribution; and
- Network engineering support through the creation and application of new and novel procedures and tools and network measurement and monitoring software for solving end-to-end network performance issues, especially for dynamically constructed network services.

**Additionally, proposals are encouraged to perform experimental deployment, protocol prototyping and testing, and evaluation using FABRIC (<https://www.fabric-testbed.net>).** FABRIC is a NSF-funded nationwide next-generation network testbed comprising novel extensible network elements equipped with compute and storage capabilities located throughout the network, interconnected by high-speed dedicated optical links. FABRIC's programmability combined with high-fidelity measurement capabilities provides a compelling research infrastructure that supports applied network research. Using such a testbed, for example, a researcher could conduct edge-core-cloud evaluations.

Proposals in this area must identify, in the Project Description, one or more supported science or engineering research projects or applications and describe how the proposed network integration activities will support those projects, particularly in the context of addressing data movement, throughput, and predictable performance end-to-end.

Where appropriate, proposals are encouraged to document explicit partnerships or collaborations with the campus IT/networking organization. Graduate students are expected to be involved and supported in conducting proposed activities for this program area.

Proposals in this area must include, in the Project Description, a Project Plan addressing clear project goals and milestones resulting in a working system in the target environment. Proposals must define base metrics relevant to the proposal goals and address measurement and evaluation of the resulting system. Any software development under proposed activities must be made available under an open source license.

Additional proposal preparation guidance for this area can be found in Section V.A. Proposal Preparation Instructions.

Only Institutions of Higher Education are eligible to submit proposals in this program area.

Proposals in this area require titles that begin with "CC\* Integration-Small": for proposed budgets of up to \$500,000 or "CC\* Integration-Large:" for proposed budgets of between \$500,001 and \$1,000,000, followed by the title of the project.

Summary of area (3) requirements:

- Proposals are required to identify, in the Project Description, one or more supported science or engineering research projects or applications and describe how the proposed network integration and applied innovation activities will support those projects.
- Graduate students should be involved and supported in conducting proposed activities.
- Proposals in this area must include, in the Project Description, a Project Plan addressing clear project goals and milestones resulting in a working system in the target environment.
- Proposals must define base metrics relevant to the proposal goals and address measurement and evaluation of the resulting system.
- Any software development under proposed activities must be made available under an open source license.
- Proposals are required to include a Campus CI plan as a Supplementary Document, limited to no more than 5 pages (see Section II. Program-wide Criteria above for more information).
- Only Institutions of Higher Education are eligible to submit proposals in this program area.
- Proposals in this area require titles that begin with "CC\* Integration-Small": for proposed budgets of up to \$500,000 or "CC\* Integration-Large:" for proposed budgets of between \$500,001 and \$1,000,000, followed by the title of the project.

#### **(4) Campus Computing and the Computing Continuum**

Local campus computing resources have emerged as an important aggregated and shared layer of scientific computing, as evidenced by the growth in the Open Science Grid (OSG), an NSF-supported distributed scientific computing fabric of shared computing clusters across more than 100 institutions that delivered 2.4 billion CPU hours of scientific computing in calendar year 2019. In 2020, NSF made a new five-year award to continue and enhance OSG under the Partnership to Advance Throughput Computing (PATH) project.

This program area promotes coordinated approaches in scientific computing at the campus level and invests in the seeding of new and shared computing resources at the campus level through investments in capacity computing in campus clusters. The program area promotes a coordinated approach incentivizing multi-campus and national resource sharing.

It is expected that the campus-wide computing needs are addressed in the proposal; a proposal focusing on a single science domain or project use will not be considered for funding.



All proposals submitted to this area must address:

- Scientific and engineering projects and their research and education computing needs, describing project-specific scenarios for scientific computing tied to the proposed computing resources;
- Features, capabilities, and software platforms representing the proposed computing resources; and
- Scientific computing codes expected to run on the resources.

All proposals should consider expected outcomes and explain the compelling need for proposed computing resource in light of the current state of available computing resources and the expected enabling benefits of the proposed resources to the identified science drivers and applications.

NSF encourages proposals in this program area from under-resourced institutions and strong preference will be given to proposals demonstrating a compelling need for access to campus/cloud resources, including institutions lacking necessary computing and storage resources on campus. Under-resourced institutions in need of technical direction/expertise during their proposal development are encouraged to engage the NSF-funded PATH project at: <http://www.opensciencegrid.org>.

The proposal may request funding for the acquisition of a shared, high-performance network-connected compute resource available to scientific computing users on campus and outside of campus.

Proposals must include in the Project Description:

- **A summary table of the science drivers and their computing environments**—these requirements should be specified in clear terms reflecting a specific understanding of the required computing resources and environment, for example, CPU/GPU type, compute job profile parameter ranges, core count ranges per job, times to completion or as part of a composition or scientific workflow profile;
- The platform architecture specifying cluster components, including compute node type and count, per-node memory, interconnect fabric, storage, and open source software/platform;
- An open source-based approach to cluster monitoring, measurement, management, and instrumentation;
- A sustainability plan addressing the institution's commitment to providing an ongoing level of sustained access to computational resources;
- A High-Performance Network Connectivity and Specification—see below for more details; and
- A description of the cluster as a Shared Resource Intra-campus and Inter-campus—see below for more details.

Proposals are encouraged to consider open source virtualization technologies.

Inclusion of itemized vendor quotes accompanying the budget is required for all proposals in this program area.

**High-Performance Network Connectivity and Specification:** Proposals must describe the network connectivity of the proposed computing resource, both intra-campus [for example, the campus network path(s) connecting the resource with the researchers and driving science applications on campus], and inter-campus [for example, showing the network path connecting with the regional exchange point or Internet2]. Proposals should include a network diagram showing the connected topology of the proposed cluster resource. Proposals should include in their plans the deployment of a PerfSonar based network performance measurement capability to initially measure achievable end-to-end network performance for scientific data flows between the resource and relevant end points of researchers.

**The Cluster as a Shared Resource Intra-campus and Inter-campus:** Proposals should describe (1) their approach to sharing the proposed computing resource across the science drivers and researchers at their institution; (2) how the resource will be accessed by external research groups; and (3) how the resource is coordinated with external resources allowing the institution's researchers to seamlessly access computing resources at other campuses, regional and national computing resources, and/or production cloud resources, if appropriate.

Proposals are required to commit to a minimum of 20% shared time on the cluster and describe their approach to making the cluster available as a shared resource external to the campus, with access and authorization according to local administrative policy. Conversely, the proposal should describe the approach to providing **on-demand** access to additional external computing resources for its targeted on-campus users and projects. One possible approach to implementing such a federated distributed computing solution is joining a multi-campus or national federated system such as the Open Science Grid. Whatever opportunistic, federated, scalable, distributed computing platform is chosen, the proposal is expected to justify the choice by including a discussion on the shared platform's track record in the community, its current scientific computing production capability, and its scaling properties. Proposals are encouraged to include a letter of collaboration from the selected platform and describe how they will track and report on meeting the 20% extramural usage goal each year.

The proposal is expected to document campus IT and research leadership commitment to operations and maintenance (O&M) given that the proposal budget is expected to be dominated by equipment, with some travel and project coordination staff time. Costs associated with software license fees are not allowed.

NSF views this area as an opportunity, especially for under-resourced institutions, to develop a scientific computing strategy, describe it in the required CI plan, and consider how the proposed resource plays into that strategy.

Campus computing solutions that integrate cloud services are particularly encouraged.

Additional proposal preparation guidance for this area can be found in Section V.A. Proposal Preparation Instructions.

Only Institutions of Higher Education are eligible to submit proposals in this program area.

Proposals in this area require titles that begin with "CC\* Compute:" followed by the title of the project.

Summary of area (4) requirements:

- Proposals are required to address scientific and engineering projects and their research and education computing needs, describing project-specific scenarios for scientific computing tied to the proposed computing resources.
- Proposals are required to address features, capabilities, and software platforms representing the proposed computing resources.

- Proposals are required to address scientific computing codes expected to run on the resources.
- Proposals are required to include a summary table of the science drivers and their computing environments. These requirements should be specified in clear terms reflecting a specific understanding of the required computing resources and environment (for example, CPU/GPU type, compute job profile parameter ranges, core count ranges per job, times to completion), or as part of a composition or scientific workflow profile.
- Proposals are required to describe the platform architecture specifying cluster components, including compute node type and count, per-node memory, interconnect fabric, storage, and open source software/platform.
- Proposals are required to describe an open source-based approach to cluster monitoring, measurement, management, and instrumentation.
- Proposals are required to describe a sustainability plan addressing the institution's commitment to providing an ongoing level of sustained access to computational resources.
- Proposals are required to describe how the cluster is connected via high-performance network connectivity, including a network topology showing how the cluster is connected to the campus network.
- Proposals are required to provide a description of the cluster as a shared resource intra-campus and inter-campus, with 20% or more of the cycles committed to extramural scientific uses.
- Proposals are required to include complete itemized vendor quotes accompanying the budget.
- Proposals are required to include a Campus CI plan as a Supplementary Document, limited to no more than 5 pages (see Section II. Program-wide Criteria above for more information).
- Only Institutions of Higher Education are eligible to submit proposals in this program area.
- Proposals in this area require titles that begin with "CC\* Compute:" followed by the title of the project.

### **(5) Planning Grants and CI-Research Alignment**

For institutions, groups of institutions, and other entities, the task of assembling a complete CC\* proposal within a 90-day deadline window can be a daunting challenge. Previous CC\* solicitations offered, in the area supporting network connectivity for small institutions, the opportunity to develop a complete technical solution during the first year of a two-year award, building on an overall design for improved campus networking required in the corresponding proposal. That "design" element no longer exists in area (2), and now requires coordination among groups of under-resourced institutions. In general, CC\* PI teams require planning and effort related to their proposal prior to the 90-day solicitation window, for example, for compiling and understanding the science environments, applications and drivers motivating the proposed CI investments.

Program Area 5 supports Planning Grants for PIs and teams requiring resources and time to coordinate and develop an approach to CC\*-related activities. Proposals in this area will be reviewed and evaluated the same as other CC\* proposals. Planning proposals should define a clear set of goals and a set of coordination and planning activities to meet those goals. Equipment costs are not allowed as part of a Planning Grant, and proposed costs are expected to include support for community coordination and planning activities. Planning proposals are welcome for areas (1) through (4) in CC\* and are limited to \$100,000 for 1 year.

This area also supports CI-Research Alignment (CIRA) activities. A CIRA award provides opportunities to foster new collaborations, including international partnerships, and address interdisciplinary topics. Innovative ideas for implementing novel networking strategies, collaborative technologies, training, broadening participation, and development of community standards for data and meta-data are especially encouraged. CIRA awards do not support primary research. A CIRA proposal is expected to develop a comprehensive CI strategy encompassing a campus, multiple campuses, or a state or regional research and education network entity. The CIRA activity may encompass planning for a future CC\* proposal, but goes beyond a specific campus network design, assessment of campus computing needs, or compilation of demanding science drivers to address integrated CI planning and scoping across the relevant scientific communities on campus, across multiple campuses, state-wide, or regionally. Proposals in this area will be reviewed and evaluated like all other CC\* proposals. CIRA proposals should define a clear set of goals and a set of coordination and planning activities to meet those goals. Equipment costs are not allowed in this program area, and proposed costs are expected to request community coordination and planning activities. CIRA proposals are limited to \$200,000 for up to 2 years.

A Campus CI plan is not required for this program area of CC\*.

Institutions of Higher Education and Nonprofit, Non-academic Organizations are eligible to submit proposals in this program area.

Proposals for Planning Grants are required to have titles that begin with "CC\* Planning:" followed by the title of the project.

Proposals for CI-Research Alignment are required to have titles that begin with "CC\* CIRA:" followed by the title of the project.

Summary of area (5) requirements:

- Equipment costs are not allowed in this program area.
- Proposals for Planning Grants are limited to \$100,000 and required to have titles that begin with "CC\* Planning:" followed by the title of the project.
- Proposals for CI-Research Alignment are limited to \$200,000 and required to have titles that begin with "CC\* CIRA:" followed by the title of the project.

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## **III. AWARD INFORMATION**

Approximately \$13 million-\$15 million will be made available in FY 2021 to support 24-46 awards, subject to the availability of funds.

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## **IV. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **Who May Submit Proposals:**

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) - Two- and four-year IHEs (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus

located in the US, acting on behalf of their faculty members. Special Instructions for International Branch Campuses of US IHEs: If the proposal includes funding to be provided to an international branch campus of a US institution of higher education (including through use of subawards and consultant arrangements), the proposer must explain the benefit(s) to the project of performance at the international branch campus, and justify why the project activities cannot be performed at the US campus.

- Non-profit, non-academic organizations: Independent museums, observatories, research labs, professional societies and similar organizations in the U.S. associated with educational or research activities.

**Who May Serve as PI:**

There are no restrictions or limits.

**Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:**

There are no restrictions or limits.

**Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or Co-PI:**

There are no restrictions or limits.

**Additional Eligibility Info:**

Institutions of Higher Education may submit proposals to any of the requested areas.

Nonprofit, Nonacademic Organizations may submit to program areas (2) Regional Connectivity for Small Institutions and (5) Cyber Team - Research and Education CI-based Regional Facilitation only.

Collaborative proposals submitted as simultaneous submission of proposals from different organizations, with each organization requesting a separate award are not allowed. Collaborative proposals submitted as a single proposal, in which a single award is being requested (with subawards administered by the lead organization) are allowed.

**Current and past awardees in program area (1) Data-Driven Networking Infrastructure for the Campus and Researcher are not eligible to apply to this program area. Any proposal received for program area (1) from an organization having already received an award in this area will be returned without review.**

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## V. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

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### A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

**Full Proposal Preparation Instructions:** Proposers may opt to submit proposals in response to this Program Solicitation via FastLane, Research.gov, or Grants.gov.

- Full proposals submitted via FastLane: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the general guidelines contained in the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG). The complete text of the PAPPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg). Paper copies of the PAPPG may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-8134 or by e-mail from [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov). Proposers are reminded to identify this program solicitation number in the program solicitation block on the NSF Cover Sheet For Proposal to the National Science Foundation. Compliance with this requirement is critical to determining the relevant proposal processing guidelines. Failure to submit this information may delay processing.
- Full Proposals submitted via Research.gov: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the general guidelines contained in the *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG). The complete text of the PAPPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg). Paper copies of the PAPPG may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-8134 or by e-mail from [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov). The Prepare New Proposal setup will prompt you for the program solicitation number.
- Full proposals submitted via Grants.gov: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation via Grants.gov should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov*. The complete text of the *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide* is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: ([https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=grantsgovguide](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide)). To obtain copies of the Application Guide and Application Forms Package, click on the Apply tab on the Grants.gov site, then click on the Apply Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Application Instructions link and enter the funding opportunity number, (the program solicitation number without the NSF prefix) and press the Download Package button. Paper copies of the Grants.gov Application Guide also may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-8134 or by e-mail from [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov).

See PAPPG Chapter II.C.2 for guidance on the required sections of a full research proposal submitted to NSF. Please note that the proposal preparation instructions provided in this program solicitation may deviate from the PAPPG instructions.

Proposals are encouraged to review the NSF/CISE Data Management Guidance for CISE Proposals and Awards available at [www.nsf.gov/cise/cise\\_dmp.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/cise/cise_dmp.jsp).

**For area (1) Data-Driven Networking Infrastructure for the Campus and Researcher Proposals:**

Proposals in this area require titles that begin with "CC\* Networking Infrastructure:" followed by the title of project.

Refer to Section II. Program Description, for additional information about requirements for CC\* proposals. In particular, a Campus CI plan must be included, with a limit of up to 5 pages, as a Supplementary Document.

#### **For area (2) Regional Connectivity for Small Institutions Proposals:**

Proposals in this area require titles that begin with "CC\* Regional:" followed by the title of project.

Refer to Section II. Program Description, for additional information about requirements for CC\* proposals. In particular, a Campus CI plan must be included, with a limit of up to 5 pages, as a Supplementary Document.

If appropriate, proposals in this area are allowed to have their Campus CI plan represent a multi institutional or regional CI plan, as opposed to a single campus. These plans have an opportunity to convey a future vision of intercampus cyberinfrastructure in support of distributed scientific research and education.

#### **For area (3) Network Integration and Applied Innovation Proposals:**

Proposals in this area require titles that begin with "CC\* Integration-Small": for proposed budgets up to \$500,000 or "CC\* Integration-Large:" for proposed budgets of between \$500,001 and \$1,000,000, followed by the title of the project.

Refer to Section II. Program Description, for additional information about requirements for CC\* proposals. In particular, a Campus CI plan must be included, with a limit of up to 5 pages, as a Supplementary Document.

#### **For area (4) Campus Computing and the Computing Continuum Proposals:**

Proposals in this area require titles that begin with "CC\* Compute:" followed by the title of project.

Refer to Section II. Program Description, for additional information about requirements for CC\* proposals. In particular, a Campus CI plan must be included, with a limit of up to 5 pages, as a Supplementary Document.

#### **For area (5) Planning Grants and CI-Research Alignment Proposals:**

Proposals for Planning Grants are required to have titles that begin with "CC\* Planning:" followed by the title of the project.

Proposals for CI-Research Alignment are required to have titles that begin with "CC\* CIRA:" followed by the title of the project.

Refer to Section II. Program Description, for additional information about requirements for CC\* proposals.

## **B. Budgetary Information**

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#### **Cost Sharing:**

Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.

#### **Budget Preparation Instructions:**

Budgets should include travel funds for the project principal investigators and other team members as appropriate from all collaborating institutions to attend annual Principal Investigators' meetings.

## **C. Due Dates**

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- **Full Proposal Deadline(s)** (due by 5 p.m. submitter's local time):

March 01, 2021

October 11, 2021

## **D. FastLane/Research.gov/Grants.gov Requirements**

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#### **For Proposals Submitted Via FastLane or Research.gov:**

To prepare and submit a proposal via FastLane, see detailed technical instructions available at: <https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/a1/newstan.htm>. To prepare and submit a proposal via Research.gov, see detailed technical instructions available at: [https://www.research.gov/research-portal/appmanager/base/desktop?\\_nfpb=true&\\_pageLabel=research\\_node\\_display&\\_nodePath=/researchGov/Service/Desktop/ProposalPreparationandSubmission.html](https://www.research.gov/research-portal/appmanager/base/desktop?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=research_node_display&_nodePath=/researchGov/Service/Desktop/ProposalPreparationandSubmission.html). For FastLane or Research.gov user support, call the FastLane and Research.gov Help Desk at 1-800-673-6188 or e-mail [fastlane@nsf.gov](mailto:fastlane@nsf.gov) or [rgov@nsf.gov](mailto:rgov@nsf.gov). The FastLane and Research.gov Help Desk answers general technical questions related to the use of the FastLane and Research.gov systems. Specific questions related to this program solicitation should be referred to the NSF program staff contact(s) listed in Section VIII of this funding opportunity.

#### **For Proposals Submitted Via Grants.gov:**

Before using Grants.gov for the first time, each organization must register to create an institutional profile. Once registered, the applicant's organization can then apply for any federal grant on the Grants.gov website. Comprehensive information about using Grants.gov is available on the Grants.gov Applicant Resources webpage: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants.html>. In addition, the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide (see link in Section V.A) provides instructions regarding the technical preparation of proposals via Grants.gov. For Grants.gov user support, contact the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or by email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The Grants.gov Contact Center answers general technical questions related to the use of Grants.gov. Specific questions related to this program solicitation should be referred to the NSF program staff contact(s) listed in Section VIII of this solicitation.

**Submitting the Proposal:** Once all documents have been completed, the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) must submit the application to Grants.gov and verify the desired funding opportunity and agency to which the application is submitted. The AOR must then sign and submit the application to Grants.gov. The completed application will be transferred to the NSF FastLane system for further processing.

Proposers that submitted via FastLane or Research.gov may use Research.gov to verify the status of their submission to NSF. For proposers that submitted via Grants.gov, until an application has been received and validated by NSF, the Authorized Organizational Representative may check the status of an application on Grants.gov. After proposers have received an e-mail notification from NSF, Research.gov should be used to check the status of an application.

## VI. NSF PROPOSAL PROCESSING AND REVIEW PROCEDURES

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Proposals received by NSF are assigned to the appropriate NSF program for acknowledgement and, if they meet NSF requirements, for review. All proposals are carefully reviewed by a scientist, engineer, or educator serving as an NSF Program Officer, and usually by three to ten other persons outside NSF either as *ad hoc* reviewers, panelists, or both, who are experts in the particular fields represented by the proposal. These reviewers are selected by Program Officers charged with oversight of the review process. Proposers are invited to suggest names of persons they believe are especially well qualified to review the proposal and/or persons they would prefer not review the proposal. These suggestions may serve as one source in the reviewer selection process at the Program Officer's discretion. Submission of such names, however, is optional. Care is taken to ensure that reviewers have no conflicts of interest with the proposal. In addition, Program Officers may obtain comments from site visits before recommending final action on proposals. Senior NSF staff further review recommendations for awards. A flowchart that depicts the entire NSF proposal and award process (and associated timeline) is included in PAPPG Exhibit III-1.

A comprehensive description of the Foundation's merit review process is available on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit\\_review/](https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/).

Proposers should also be aware of core strategies that are essential to the fulfillment of NSF's mission, as articulated in *Building the Future: Investing in Discovery and Innovation - NSF Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2018 – 2022*. These strategies are integrated in the program planning and implementation process, of which proposal review is one part. NSF's mission is particularly well-implemented through the integration of research and education and broadening participation in NSF programs, projects, and activities.

One of the strategic objectives in support of NSF's mission is to foster integration of research and education through the programs, projects, and activities it supports at academic and research institutions. These institutions must recruit, train, and prepare a diverse STEM workforce to advance the frontiers of science and participate in the U.S. technology-based economy. NSF's contribution to the national innovation ecosystem is to provide cutting-edge research under the guidance of the Nation's most creative scientists and engineers. NSF also supports development of a strong science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce by investing in building the knowledge that informs improvements in STEM teaching and learning.

NSF's mission calls for the broadening of opportunities and expanding participation of groups, institutions, and geographic regions that are underrepresented in STEM disciplines, which is essential to the health and vitality of science and engineering. NSF is committed to this principle of diversity and deems it central to the programs, projects, and activities it considers and supports.

### A. Merit Review Principles and Criteria

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The National Science Foundation strives to invest in a robust and diverse portfolio of projects that creates new knowledge and enables breakthroughs in understanding across all areas of science and engineering research and education. To identify which projects to support, NSF relies on a merit review process that incorporates consideration of both the technical aspects of a proposed project and its potential to contribute more broadly to advancing NSF's mission "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense; and for other purposes." NSF makes every effort to conduct a fair, competitive, transparent merit review process for the selection of projects.

#### 1. Merit Review Principles

These principles are to be given due diligence by PIs and organizations when preparing proposals and managing projects, by reviewers when reading and evaluating proposals, and by NSF program staff when determining whether or not to recommend proposals for funding and while overseeing awards. Given that NSF is the primary federal agency charged with nurturing and supporting excellence in basic research and education, the following three principles apply:

- All NSF projects should be of the highest quality and have the potential to advance, if not transform, the frontiers of knowledge.
- NSF projects, in the aggregate, should contribute more broadly to achieving societal goals. These "Broader Impacts" may be accomplished through the research itself, through activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project. The project activities may be based on previously established and/or innovative methods and approaches, but in either case must be well justified.
- Meaningful assessment and evaluation of NSF funded projects should be based on appropriate metrics, keeping in mind the likely correlation between the effect of broader impacts and the resources provided to implement projects. If the size of the activity is limited, evaluation of that activity in isolation is not likely to be meaningful. Thus, assessing the effectiveness of these activities may best be done at a higher, more aggregated, level than the individual project.

With respect to the third principle, even if assessment of Broader Impacts outcomes for particular projects is done at an aggregated level, PIs are expected to be accountable for carrying out the activities described in the funded project. Thus, individual projects should include clearly stated goals, specific descriptions of the activities that the PI intends to do, and a plan in place to document the outputs of those activities.

These three merit review principles provide the basis for the merit review criteria, as well as a context within which the users of the criteria can better understand their intent.

#### 2. Merit Review Criteria

All NSF proposals are evaluated through use of the two National Science Board approved merit review criteria. In some instances, however, NSF will employ additional criteria as required to highlight the specific objectives of certain programs and activities.

The two merit review criteria are listed below. **Both** criteria are to be given **full consideration** during the review and decision-making processes; each criterion

is necessary but neither, by itself, is sufficient. Therefore, proposers must fully address both criteria. (PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.d(i). contains additional information for use by proposers in development of the Project Description section of the proposal). Reviewers are strongly encouraged to review the criteria, including PAPPG Chapter II.C.2.d(i), prior to the review of a proposal.

When evaluating NSF proposals, reviewers will be asked to consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers will be asked to evaluate all proposals against two criteria:

- **Intellectual Merit:** The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and
- **Broader Impacts:** The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

The following elements should be considered in the review for both criteria:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to
  - a. Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
  - b. Benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?
2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
3. Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?
4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?
5. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through the activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project. NSF values the advancement of scientific knowledge and activities that contribute to achievement of societally relevant outcomes. Such outcomes include, but are not limited to: full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); improved STEM education and educator development at any level; increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology; improved well-being of individuals in society; development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce; increased partnerships between academia, industry, and others; improved national security; increased economic competitiveness of the United States; and enhanced infrastructure for research and education.

Proposers are reminded that reviewers will also be asked to review the Data Management Plan and the Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan, as appropriate.

#### **Additional Solicitation Specific Review Criteria**

**All CC\* projects will be reviewed with careful attention to the following:**

- *The extent to which the work provides a needed capability required by science, engineering and education.*
- *The expected impact on the deployed environment described in the proposal, and potential impact across a broader segment of the NSF community.*
- *Where applicable, how resource access control, federated identity management, and other cybersecurity related issues and community best practices are addressed.*
- **A Cyberinfrastructure (CI) plan: [except for area (5) as noted earlier]:** *To what extent is the planned cyberinfrastructure likely to enhance capacity for discovery, innovation, and education in science and engineering? How well does the plan as presented position the proposing institution(s) for future cyberinfrastructure development? How well does the cyberinfrastructure plan support and integrate with the institutions' science and technology plan? Are IPv6 deployment and InCommon Federation addressed? Are the activities described in the proposal consistent with the institution's cyberinfrastructure plan?*

**Additionally, for proposals in area (1) Data Driven Networking Infrastructure for the Campus and Researcher and area (2) Regional Connectivity for Small Institutions of Higher Education:**

- **A Project Plan** addressing clear goals and milestones resulting in a working system in the target environment.

**Additionally, for proposals in area (3) Network Integration and Applied Innovation:**

- **A Project Plan** addressing clear goals and milestones resulting in a working system in the target environment.
- **Tangible metrics** to measure the success of the integrated systems and any associated software developed, and the steps necessary to take the systems from prototype status to production use.

**Additionally, for proposals in area (4) Campus Computing and the Computing Continuum:**

- *The extent to which science drivers and applications motivate the types of compute and cloud resources requested.*
- **A Project Plan** addressing clear goals and milestones.
- **Tangible metrics** to measure the success of the system or set of activities.

## **B. Review and Selection Process**

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Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation will be reviewed by Ad hoc Review and/or Panel Review.

Reviewers will be asked to evaluate proposals using two National Science Board approved merit review criteria and, if applicable, additional program specific criteria. A summary rating and accompanying narrative will generally be completed and submitted by each reviewer and/or panel. The Program Officer assigned to manage the proposal's review will consider the advice of reviewers and will formulate a recommendation.

After scientific, technical and programmatic review and consideration of appropriate factors, the NSF Program Officer recommends to the cognizant Division Director whether the proposal should be declined or recommended for award. NSF strives to be able to tell applicants whether their proposals have been declined or recommended for funding within six months. Large or particularly complex proposals or proposals from new awardees may require additional review and processing time. The time interval begins on the deadline or target date, or receipt date, whichever is later. The interval ends when the Division Director acts upon the Program Officer's recommendation.

After programmatic approval has been obtained, the proposals recommended for funding will be forwarded to the Division of Grants and Agreements for review of business, financial, and policy implications. After an administrative review has occurred, Grants and Agreements Officers perform the processing and issuance of a grant or other agreement. Proposers are cautioned that only a Grants and Agreements Officer may make commitments, obligations or awards on behalf of NSF or authorize the expenditure of funds. No commitment on the part of NSF should be inferred from technical or budgetary discussions with a NSF Program Officer. A Principal Investigator or organization that makes financial or personnel commitments in the absence of a grant or cooperative agreement signed by the NSF Grants and Agreements Officer does so at their own risk.

Once an award or declination decision has been made, Principal Investigators are provided feedback about their proposals. In all cases, reviews are treated as confidential documents. Verbatim copies of reviews, excluding the names of the reviewers or any reviewer-identifying information, are sent to the Principal Investigator/Project Director by the Program Officer. In addition, the proposer will receive an explanation of the decision to award or decline funding.

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## VII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

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### A. Notification of the Award

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Notification of the award is made to *the submitting organization* by a Grants Officer in the Division of Grants and Agreements. Organizations whose proposals are declined will be advised as promptly as possible by the cognizant NSF Program administering the program. Verbatim copies of reviews, not including the identity of the reviewer, will be provided automatically to the Principal Investigator. (See Section VI.B. for additional information on the review process.)

### B. Award Conditions

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An NSF award consists of: (1) the award notice, which includes any special provisions applicable to the award and any numbered amendments thereto; (2) the budget, which indicates the amounts, by categories of expense, on which NSF has based its support (or otherwise communicates any specific approvals or disapprovals of proposed expenditures); (3) the proposal referenced in the award notice; (4) the applicable award conditions, such as Grant General Conditions (GC-1)\*; or Research Terms and Conditions\* and (5) any announcement or other NSF issuance that may be incorporated by reference in the award notice. Cooperative agreements also are administered in accordance with NSF Cooperative Agreement Financial and Administrative Terms and Conditions (CA-FATC) and the applicable Programmatic Terms and Conditions. NSF awards are electronically signed by an NSF Grants and Agreements Officer and transmitted electronically to the organization via e-mail.

\*These documents may be accessed electronically on NSF's Website at [https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/award\\_conditions.jsp?org=NSF](https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/award_conditions.jsp?org=NSF). Paper copies may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-8134 or by e-mail from [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov).

More comprehensive information on NSF Award Conditions and other important information on the administration of NSF awards is contained in the NSF *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) Chapter VII, available electronically on the NSF Website at [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).

### C. Reporting Requirements

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For all multi-year grants (including both standard and continuing grants), the Principal Investigator must submit an annual project report to the cognizant Program Officer no later than 90 days prior to the end of the current budget period. (Some programs or awards require submission of more frequent project reports). No later than 120 days following expiration of a grant, the PI also is required to submit a final project report, and a project outcomes report for the general public.

Failure to provide the required annual or final project reports, or the project outcomes report, will delay NSF review and processing of any future funding increments as well as any pending proposals for all identified PIs and co-PIs on a given award. PIs should examine the formats of the required reports in advance to assure availability of required data.

PIs are required to use NSF's electronic project-reporting system, available through Research.gov, for preparation and submission of annual and final project reports. Such reports provide information on accomplishments, project participants (individual and organizational), publications, and other specific products and impacts of the project. Submission of the report via Research.gov constitutes certification by the PI that the contents of the report are accurate and complete. The project outcomes report also must be prepared and submitted using Research.gov. This report serves as a brief summary, prepared specifically for the public, of the nature and outcomes of the project. This report will be posted on the NSF website exactly as it is submitted by the PI.

More comprehensive information on NSF Reporting Requirements and other important information on the administration of NSF awards is contained in the NSF *Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) Chapter VII, available electronically on the NSF Website at [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).

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## VIII. AGENCY CONTACTS

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*Please note that the program contact information is current at the time of publishing. See program website for any updates to the points of contact.*

General inquiries regarding this program should be made to:

- Kevin L. Thompson, Program Director, CISE/OAC, telephone: (703) 292-4220, email: [kthomps@nsf.gov](mailto:kthomps@nsf.gov)

Deepankar (Deep) Medhi, Program Director, CISE/CNS, telephone: (703) 292-8950, email: [dmedhi@nsf.gov](mailto:dmedhi@nsf.gov)

For questions related to the use of FastLane or Research.gov, contact:

- FastLane and Research.gov Help Desk: 1-800-673-6188
- FastLane Help Desk e-mail: [fastlane@nsf.gov](mailto:fastlane@nsf.gov).
- Research.gov Help Desk e-mail: [rgov@nsf.gov](mailto:rgov@nsf.gov)

For questions relating to Grants.gov contact:

- Grants.gov Contact Center: If the Authorized Organizational Representatives (AOR) has not received a confirmation message from Grants.gov within 48 hours of submission of application, please contact via telephone: 1-800-518-4726; e-mail: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).

## IX. OTHER INFORMATION

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The NSF website provides the most comprehensive source of information on NSF Directorates (including contact information), programs and funding opportunities. Use of this website by potential proposers is strongly encouraged. In addition, "NSF Update" is an information-delivery system designed to keep potential proposers and other interested parties apprised of new NSF funding opportunities and publications, important changes in proposal and award policies and procedures, and upcoming NSF [Grants Conferences](#). Subscribers are informed through e-mail or the user's Web browser each time new publications are issued that match their identified interests. "NSF Update" also is available on [NSF's website](#).

Grants.gov provides an additional electronic capability to search for Federal government-wide grant opportunities. NSF funding opportunities may be accessed via this mechanism. Further information on Grants.gov may be obtained at <https://www.grants.gov>.

### Related Programs:

NSF Advisory Committee for Cyberinfrastructure Task Force on Campus Bridging, *Final Report*, March 2011. Available from: [https://www.nsf.gov/cise/oac/taskforces/TaskForceReport\\_CampusBridging.pdf](https://www.nsf.gov/cise/oac/taskforces/TaskForceReport_CampusBridging.pdf)

Reference material on the "Science DMZ" concept is available at: <http://fasterdata.es.net/fasterdata/science-dmz/>

## ABOUT THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

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The National Science Foundation (NSF) is an independent Federal agency created by the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended (42 USC 1861-75). The Act states the purpose of the NSF is "to promote the progress of science; [and] to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare by supporting research and education in all fields of science and engineering."

NSF funds research and education in most fields of science and engineering. It does this through grants and cooperative agreements to more than 2,000 colleges, universities, K-12 school systems, businesses, informal science organizations and other research organizations throughout the US. The Foundation accounts for about one-fourth of Federal support to academic institutions for basic research.

NSF receives approximately 55,000 proposals each year for research, education and training projects, of which approximately 11,000 are funded. In addition, the Foundation receives several thousand applications for graduate and postdoctoral fellowships. The agency operates no laboratories itself but does support National Research Centers, user facilities, certain oceanographic vessels and Arctic and Antarctic research stations. The Foundation also supports cooperative research between universities and industry, US participation in international scientific and engineering efforts, and educational activities at every academic level.

*Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities* (FASSED) provide funding for special assistance or equipment to enable persons with disabilities to work on NSF-supported projects. See the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* Chapter II.E.6 for instructions regarding preparation of these types of proposals.

The National Science Foundation has Telephonic Device for the Deaf (TDD) and Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) capabilities that enable individuals with hearing impairments to communicate with the Foundation about NSF programs, employment or general information. TDD may be accessed at (703) 292-5090 and (800) 281-8749, FIRS at (800) 877-8339.

The National Science Foundation Information Center may be reached at (703) 292-5111.

The National Science Foundation promotes and advances scientific progress in the United States by competitively awarding grants and cooperative agreements for research and education in the sciences, mathematics, and engineering.

To get the latest information about program deadlines, to download copies of NSF publications, and to access abstracts of awards, visit the NSF Website at <https://www.nsf.gov>

- **Location:** 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22314
- **For General Information** (NSF Information Center): (703) 292-5111
- **TDD (for the hearing-impaired):** (703) 292-5090
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• **To Locate NSF Employees:** (703) 292-5111

## PRIVACY ACT AND PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENTS

The information requested on proposal forms and project reports is solicited under the authority of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended. The information on proposal forms will be used in connection with the selection of qualified proposals; and project reports submitted by awardees will be used for program evaluation and reporting within the Executive Branch and to Congress. The information requested may be disclosed to qualified reviewers and staff assistants as part of the proposal review process; to proposer institutions/grantees to provide or obtain data regarding the proposal review process, award decisions, or the administration of awards; to government contractors, experts, volunteers and researchers and educators as necessary to complete assigned work; to other government agencies or other entities needing information regarding applicants or nominees as part of a joint application review process, or in order to coordinate programs or policy; and to another Federal agency, court, or party in a court or Federal administrative proceeding if the government is a party. Information about Principal Investigators may be added to the Reviewer file and used to select potential candidates to serve as peer reviewers or advisory committee members. See [System of Record Notices](#), NSF-50, "Principal Investigator/Proposal File and Associated Records," and NSF-51, "Reviewer/Proposal File and Associated Records." Submission of the information is voluntary. Failure to provide full and complete information, however, may reduce the possibility of receiving an award.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, an information collection unless it displays a valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. The OMB control number for this collection is 3145-0058. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 120 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions. Send comments regarding the burden estimate and any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to:

Suzanne H. Plimpton  
Reports Clearance Officer  
Office of the General Counsel  
National Science Foundation  
Alexandria, VA 22314

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