



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 22-024

December 6, 2021

Dear Colleague:

The number of job openings in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields continues to increase across the United States, offering a wide variety of well-paying, stable employment opportunities that contribute to the wellbeing and security of individuals, communities, and the United States as a whole. Concurrently, the shortage of individuals to fill these positions is also growing. Contributing to this shortage is the minoritization of Indigenous people in the U.S. (including American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians) in college degree programs that prepare them to hold STEM positions.

A growing body of evidence indicates that educational interventions exposing high school students to college-level content, such as dual enrollment and early college, are effective in strengthening students' preparation for postsecondary enrollment and improving postsecondary outcomes, including retention, time to graduation, and degree completion. Empirical findings indicate these positive effects are enjoyed by students across demographic groups including those from low-income households, first generation college students, and students who are members of racial and ethnic groups minoritized in STEM, including Indigenous students. For those in rural areas, such as American Indians living on reservation lands, these programs often have the added benefits of providing access to academic enrichment opportunities not available in local high schools and supporting the preparation of Indigenous professionals ready to fill positions in their rural communities.

In alignment with the NSF Tribal Colleges and Universities Program's (TCUP) goal to support TCUP-eligible institutions in strengthening their STEM programs, this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) invites submission of proposals that focus on preparing secondary students for the pursuit of postsecondary STEM degrees. Proposed projects should primarily focus on applying the institution's STEM capacity to enhance secondary students' college-level content knowledge but may also support students' college readiness by strengthening relevant skills and dispositions. Example project activities include **dual enrollment programs** (in which secondary students earn college credit through the completion of college-level coursework) or **early college programs** (which offer college credit as well as a broader range of college-readiness strategies and wrap-around services).

HOW TO RESPOND TO THIS DCL

Proposals in response to this DCL should be submitted to the TCUP Targeted STEM Infusion Project (TSIP) funding strand, which has an annual submission deadline of April 1. The typical size of a TSIP award is \$500,000, with a typical duration of three years. For further guidance, those intending to submit proposals should refer to the TCUP solicitation, [NSF 21-595](#), paying particular attention to the sections that describe the TSIP funding strand. PIs are strongly encouraged to contact TCUP program officers to discuss their project ideas in advance of proposal submission.

Organizations eligible to submit proposals in response to this DCL are Tribal Colleges and Universities, Alaska Native-serving institutions, and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions, as specified below. Executive Order 13021 defines Tribal Colleges and Universities ("tribal colleges") as those institutions cited in section 532 of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 301 note), and other institutions that qualify for funding under the Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act of 1978, (25 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.), as well as Navajo Community College as authorized in the Navajo Community College Assistance Act of 1978, Public Law 95-471, Title II (25 U.S.C. 640a note). The term "Alaska Native-serving institution" means an institution of higher education that is an eligible institution under section 1058(b) of the Higher Education Act; and that, at the time of submission, has an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 20 percent Alaska Native students. The term "Native Hawaiian-serving institution" means an institution of higher education that is an eligible institution under section 1058(b) of the Higher Education Act; has a Carnegie classification of baccalaureate or associate's college; and has, at the time of submission, an undergraduate enrollment that is at least 10 percent Native Hawaiian students. Eligibility may be verified by consulting the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) or other certified federal government data sources.

This DCL will remain in effect until December 31, 2023.

Questions and communication should be directed to the TCUP program directors:

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Sincerely,

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