NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 22-042

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for EHR Core Research: Building Capacity in STEM Education Research (ECR: BCSER)

The ECR: BCSER Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and responses are organized into three sections below: general questions that apply to all tracks, questions specific to the Individual Investigator Development (IID) Track, and questions specific to the Institutes for Methods and Practices (IMP) Track.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Is my proposal idea appropriate for a submission to the EHR Core Research: Building Capacity in STEM Education Research (ECR: BCSER) competition?

2. What is the relationship between the EHR Core Research (ECR: Core) program and the ECR: BCSER program?

3. Does ECR: BCSER accept Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) proposals?

4. Can a principal investigator (PI) apply simultaneously to ECR: BCSER and other EHR programs?

5. Can an ECR: BCSER proposal request support for a period of less than three years?

6. Can ECR: BSCER proposals include a focus on more than one of the EHR Core Research Areas (STEM Learning and Learning Environments, Broadening Participation in STEM, and STEM Workforce Development)?

7. What education levels and settings may be foci of ECR: BCSER proposals?

8. Do proposals to ECR: BCSER need to include a project evaluation plan?

9. Can an ECR: BCSER proposal budgets include subawards?

INDIVIDUAL INVESTIGATOR DEVELOPMENT (IID) TRACK QUESTIONS

10. What are the key differences between the Individual Investigator Development (IID) track of the ECR: BCSER program and the Mid-Career Advancement (MCA) program?

INSTITUTIONS FOR METHODS AND PRACTICES (IMP) TRACK QUESTIONS

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. **Is my proposal idea appropriate for a submission to the EHR Core Research: Building Capacity in STEM Education Research (ECR: BCSER) competition?**

   ECR: BCSER supports projects that build and expand investigators' capacity to carry out high-quality STEM education research. The program seeks to support activities that enable researchers to expand their areas of expertise and acquire new knowledge and skills. This may be accomplished by an investigator-initiated professional development and research project (via the Individual Investigator Development track) or by developing an institute that provides professional development for other researchers to gain expertise in methodological strategies, theory, and/or practical issues in STEM education research (the Institutes for Methods and Practices track). Please read our program solicitation (NSF 22-548) and contact us at ECRBCSER@nsf.gov with any questions. We also encourage you to send us a one-page summary if you would like to check with us on the fit of your proposed project with the ECR: BCSER competition.

2. **What is the relationship between the EHR Core Research (ECR: Core) program and the ECR: BCSER program?**

   The ECR: Core Research program (NSF 21-588) supports fundamental STEM education research projects that contribute to the general, explanatory knowledge that underlies STEM education. The ECR: BCSER program (NSF 22-548) seeks to build the **capacity** of investigators to contribute to this knowledge base. In other words, a distinguishing characteristic of the ECR: BCSER program is its focus on professional development to build investigators' capacity to conduct fundamental STEM education research that might be supported by ECR: Core and other programs in the future.

3. **Does ECR: BCSER accept Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) proposals?**

No, CAREER proposals cannot be submitted to ECR: BCSER. The Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR) programs that accept CAREER proposals can be found in Dear Colleague Letter NSF 20-084 at https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf20084.

4. **Can a principal investigator (PI) apply simultaneously to ECR: BCSER and other EHR programs?**

   Yes, PIs may apply to ECR: BCSER and other EHR programs simultaneously provided that the same or a substantially similar proposal is not under consideration by more than one NSF program at the same time (see the NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide).

5. **Can an ECR: BCSER proposal request support for a period of less than three years?**

   Yes, the solicitation allows project durations of "up to three years" for both the Individual Investigator Development (IID) and Institutes for Methods and Practices (IMP) tracks.

6. **Can ECR: BSCER proposals include a focus on more than one of the EHR Core Research Areas (STEM Learning and Learning Environments, Broadening Participation in STEM, and STEM Workforce Development)?**

   Yes. ECR: BCSER proposals may be focused on any of the broad EHR Core Research Areas, which are not mutually exclusive, and also encourages focusing on research that integrates more than one Core Research Area. PIs should identify their focal Core Research Area(s) in the project description and project summary.

7. **What education levels and settings may be foci of ECR: BCSER proposals?**

   ECR: BCSER proposals may involve learners of any age or education level. Settings may include any formal or informal STEM learning environments, including the workplace. PIs should identify their focal education levels and settings in the project description and project summary.

8. **Do proposals to ECR: BCSER need to include a project evaluation plan?**

   Yes, the guiding questions for NSF merit review include consideration of how the proposal incorporates a mechanism to assess the success of the proposed project.

9. **Can an ECR: BCSER proposal budgets include subawards?**

   Yes, subawards are allowed.

INDIVIDUAL INVESTIGATOR DEVELOPMENT (IID) TRACK QUESTIONS

10. **What are the key differences between the Individual Investigator Development (IID) track of the ECR: BCSER program and the Mid-Career Advancement (MCA) program?**

The ECR: BCSER program is managed by the Education and Human Resources (EHR) Directorate, while Mid-Career Advancement (NSF 21-516) is an NSF-wide program in which EHR participates. The MCA program offers an opportunity for a PI at the Associate Professor (or equivalent) rank for at least three years to substantively enhance their research program through synergistic and mutually beneficial partnerships. For ECR: BCSER, there are no constraints with respect to the PI's stage of career. As you will see in the program solicitations, there are some other details that differ as well, such as specific requirements for MCA proposal budget requests. Some proposals from mid-career PIs may be appropriate for submission to either BCSER IID or MCA.

11. **How should I decide whether I should apply to ECR: BCSER as "New to STEM Education Research" or "Experienced in STEM Education Research"?**

The program solicitation states, "Investigators experienced in STEM education research may have earned a graduate degree in a STEM education field; hold a professional position in STEM education research; and/or have published STEM education research in peer-reviewed journals. Investigators new to STEM education research typically do not have such formal training, professional positions, or publications in STEM education research. ECR: BCSER recognizes that there is a continuum of STEM education research experience and expertise. Thus, if it is not clear whether the PI would be considered experienced in or new to STEM education research, please contact ECRBCSER@nsf.gov for guidance."

12. **In addition to the principal investigator (PI), can a BCSER: IID proposal request support for other senior personnel?**

Co-PIs are not allowed on BCSER: IID proposals, but other senior personnel are allowed.

INSTITUTIONS FOR METHODS AND PRACTICES (IMP) TRACK QUESTIONS

13. **In addition to the principal investigator (PI), can a BCSER: IMP proposal request support for other senior personnel?**

Yes. Other senior personnel, including Co-PIs, are allowed on BCSER: IMP proposals.