



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
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**NSF 22-057**

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Improving Undergraduate STEM Education: Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Program (NSF 22-545)

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

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### 1. Where can I find information about proposal preparation and submission?

Detailed proposal preparation instructions specific to the HSI Program (including deviations from the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)*), can be found in the current solicitation ([NSF 22-545](#)) under Section V.A. Proposal Preparation.

### 2. Are projects renewable?

No. However, once an award expires you may submit a new proposal to the HSI program, provided your institution satisfies the HSI eligibility criteria for the given track.

### 3. What resources are available for prospective PIs?

The HSI Program supports potential PIs in a variety of ways including providing FAQs, discussing one-pagers, offering webinars, and hosting office hours for PIs as submission dates approach. Please check the NSF HSI Program website for webinar and office hour dates and times, and well as other materials with information about the program.

### 4. Can I send you a one-page description of my idea?

Yes. HSI Program staff are happy to provide answers or ask questions (via phone or Zoom) about your idea. Sharing a "one-pager" that outlines the core issues you would

address in your proposal is a good way to initiate a conversation with HSI Program staff on your idea.

**5. Does the HSI Program support replication studies?**

Yes. The HSI Program supports projects that include adaptation/replication of known evidence-based studies and strategies and/or design and implementation of new strategies that improve undergraduate STEM education and/or broadening participation of historically underrepresented groups in STEM at HSIs.

**6. Is intersectionality part of the review criteria?**

Yes. Intersectionality refers to the cumulative way that different forms of social identities (which may have associated advantages or disadvantages) combine, overlap, and interact to influence the experience of the individual in different settings, such as educational institutions and workplaces. Specifically, proposers should recognize that gender, race, and ethnicity do not exist in isolation from each other, or from other categories of social identity, such as disability status, sexual orientation, economic background, first-generation status, etc. Please review relevant intersectionality literature and include evidence-based elements to support this aspect of your proposal.

**7. Are there any resources to learn more about intersectionality?**

The social and behavioral science literature includes many research publications on the concept of intersectionality. Some potential references are included in the current solicitation ([NSF 22-545](#)).

## ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

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**8. How do I know if my institution is eligible to apply to one of the HSI Program's Tracks?**

Eligible organizations for the HSI Program must be accredited institution of higher education and satisfy the HSI definition as specified in section 502 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1101a), i.e., be an eligible institution (as defined in the legislation). This is the same definition as the one utilized by the Department of Education. Additionally, the institution must offer undergraduate STEM educational programs that result in certificates or degrees, except for PPP submissions that propose a Planning Project for creating STEM certificates or degrees at institutions that do not currently have such programs. An HSI Certification Form, provided on the HSI Program website (<https://www.nsf.gov/ehr/Pubs/HSICertForm.pdf>), is required with submission of a proposal to the HSI Program.

**9. How do I know if my institution is a Primarily Undergraduate Institution (PUI)?**

PUIs are "accredited colleges and universities (including two-year community colleges) that award Associates degrees, Bachelor's degrees, and/or Master's degrees in NSF-supported fields but have awarded 20 or fewer doctoral degrees in all NSF-supported fields during the combined previous two academic years." For the HSI Program an organizational representative must attest to the HSI being a PUI with the Certification of PUI Eligibility included in the current HSI Program solicitation ([NSF 22-545](#)).

**10. Our institution is an HSI that has never received NSF funding. Can we submit a proposal to any track?**

Yes, institutions new to NSF can submit proposals to all tracks. If recommended for an award, the institution will be required to complete and submit information contained in the [Prospective New Awardee Guide](#).

**11. Do you need to have a PPP or IEP award to apply to the ITP track of the HSI Program?**

No.

**12. How do I determine what track and level to submit to?**

Each track is designed for a different purpose. Potential PIs are encouraged to reach out to HSI Program staff if clarification is needed regarding the foci of each track. It is important to note that there are limitations on the number of awards an institution can receive.

**13. Are there limitations on the number of proposals an institution can submit or awards an institution can receive?**

Yes. The limitations are as follows:

Track 1: PPP

1. Institutions with an active HSI Track 1: Building Capacity award under the previous solicitations [NSF 18-524](#) and [NSF 19-540](#) are not eligible to submit a PPP track proposal or receive a PPP track award until the prior HSI award's final report is submitted.
2. An eligible institution cannot have more than two active PPP awards

Track 2: IEP

1. An eligible institution cannot have more than two active IEP awards. For institutions with a current Track 1: Building Capacity award under the previous solicitations [NSF 18-524](#) and [NSF 19-540](#), each award is considered an IEP award

- for the purpose of calculating active awards for this track.
2. A collaborative award counts as an active HSI IEP award.

#### Track 3: ITP

1. One submission per institution is allowed.
2. An institution who has previously received an award to this track is no longer eligible to apply to this track.

**14. If my institution received a HSI subaward, does that count as receiving an award for the purposes of determining eligibility to submit a proposal to another Track?**

Yes, for the Implementation and Evaluation Projects (IEP) track, a subaward counts as an HSI IEP award for the purpose of calculating active awards for this track. For the Planning or Pilot Projects (PPP) track, a subaward does not count as an award.

**15. My institution is a non-HSI. Is it possible to submit a collaborative proposal to the HSI program?**

Non-HSIs cannot independently submit a proposal to any of the HSI Program Tracks. However, non-HSIs can be part of a collaborative proposal only through a subaward from a lead HSI. As defined PAPPG Chapter II.D.3. "Collaborative proposals may be submitted to NSF in one of two methods: as a single proposal, in which a single award is being requested (with subawards administered by the lead organization); or by simultaneous submission of proposals from different organizations, with each organization requesting a separate award. In either case, the lead organization's proposal must contain all requisite sections as a single package."

**16. Is there a restriction on the number of proposals that a PI/Co-PI can submit?**

Yes. An individual may be listed as PI on only one proposal and Co-PI on at most two proposals for the same submission deadline.

**17. My institution is an HSI with multiple campuses (or branches) that are HSIs. Can each campus submit a proposal?**

Maybe. Each campus that is part of a system may be considered a separate institution for HSI Program proposal submission purposes if the campus is geographically separate from the other campus(es), and if the campus has its own chief academic officer. As such, the campus submitting the HSI Program proposal must be an HSI to be eligible for one of the three tracks in the current solicitation ([NSF 22-545](#)). The proposal should make clear that these criteria are satisfied by the campus/branch.

**18. Can a non-academic institution be the lead organization on a proposal to the HSI**

## **Program?**

Non-academic institutions cannot be the lead organization for proposals submitted to PPP, IEP, or ITP tracks. Non-academic organizations along with ineligible academic institutions (e.g., emerging HSIs, consortium of eligible institutions, and non-HSIs) may be included as a partner on collaborative proposals to the HSI Program, with financial support requested via the subaward mechanism.

### **19. If a proposal includes transition between a two-year and a four-year institution, do both institutions need to be HSIs?**

The submitting institution must be an HSI for the PPP, IEP and/or ITP tracks. A non-HSI organization can be part of the proposed project, but any financial support should be provided via the subaward mechanism or as a contract.

### **20. Can a faculty member from a non-HSI be a co-PI of a proposal?**

Yes, but a strong justification for the expertise this co-PI brings to the proposal and why this expertise is not available at the proposing institution needs to be provided in the proposal.

### **21. My institution is submitting a proposal to another NSF program. Can we also submit a proposal to the HSI Program?**

Yes, but they cannot be the same proposal. Per PAPPG Chapter IV.B, a proposal will be returned without review by NSF if it is a duplicate of, or substantially similar to, a proposal already under consideration by NSF from the same submitter.

## **PROPOSAL PREPARATION**

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### **22. Are partnerships without a collaborative proposal or subaward possible?**

Yes. Partnerships can be established in a variety of ways. For example, visits to industry or community partners for students to gain knowledge about job opportunities.

### **23. When is a Faculty Research Plan required?**

Proposals may include research outside the core education research of the proposed project as described in the proposal's project description. Each faculty member receiving funds to conduct research outside the core research of the project must include a maximum four-page Faculty Research Plan as a supplementary document. One to two pages of the Research Plan should describe the researcher's track record in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), mentoring, and advancing undergraduate students in STEM; the remaining pages should describe the proposed research.

**24. When are Student Mentoring Plans required?**

A Student Mentoring Plan is required for all proposals requesting stipends or wages to support undergraduate or graduate students. Student Mentoring Plans for undergraduate students should be separate and distinct from mentoring plans for graduate students that are involved in the project. Student Mentoring Plans should not only speak to research mentoring for the students, but how they will be mentored to achieve the next level in their academic or professional careers. The Student Mentoring Plan/s (maximum 1 page per plan) should be provided as a supplementary document/s, as applicable.

**25. Are all required documents externally reviewed?**

Yes, reviewers are asked to review all the materials submitted in the proposal, with the exception of Single-Copy Documents, which are for NSF use only. Failure to submit any required component or section may result in the proposal being returned without review as indicated in the NSF PAPPG (Chapter IV.B).

**26. Would we include all the data we have on our institution in the Institutional Data Narrative supplementary document?**

No, you should only include data in your Institutional Data Narrative that is relevant to your case for the need of the proposed project. Proposers should follow the guidance for preparing the "Institutional Data Narrative" contained in Section V.A of the current HSI solicitation ([NSF 22-545](#)) to ensure that the Institutional Data Narrative addresses what is required.

**27. How many pages are dedicated to describing the research?**

The solicitation does not indicate a page limit for the discussion of the research plan, required for IEP and ITP proposals, in the Project Description. Instructions for proposal preparation, including all required elements, are included in the current solicitation ([NSF 22-545](#)) and in the NSF PAPPG (Chapter II C).

**28. Does an eligible institution have to submit the NSF HSI Certification Form or can that institution submit its own HSI Certification form?**

The HSI Certification Form provided on the HSI Program webpage must be submitted with a proposal to the HSI Program. The program will not accept substitutions to this requirement. Proposals will be returned without review if the required form is not signed by your AOR and submitted as a supplementary document with your proposal to the HSI Program.

**29. Who should submit letters of collaboration or commitment?**

All letters of collaboration or commitment should follow the guidance contained in PAPPG Chapter II. C.2.d (iv) except where otherwise noted in the current solicitation. The content of the letters should be tailored to the project. Regardless of track, letters of support that merely endorse the project or offer nonspecific support for the project activities should not be included as their inclusion may cause the proposal to be returned without review. For the IEP and ITP tracks, one letter is required that discusses the institution's leadership (President, Provost, or Chancellor for ITP; Provost or Dean for IEP) commitment to the implementation of the proposed IEP or ITP, and the plan for institutionalization to sustain improvements to STEM undergraduate education. Regardless of track (PPP, IEP, or ITP), if an institution has partners for a proposed project, letters of commitment or collaboration are required from each partner, indicating the partner's commitment and role in the proposed activities.

**30. Are you expecting proposals to address all of the priority areas of the HSI program?**

No. A proposal may address a single priority area.

## **PROJECT ELEMENTS**

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**31. What are the required elements of a proposal?**

The current NSF PAPPG (Chapter II.C.2) provides general instructions on all required sections of any NSF proposal. The HSI Program solicitation specifies additional information and supplementary documentation that must be included with your proposal. Please refer to the current solicitation ([NSF 22-545](#)) for more information on these HSI Program Solicitation requirements: Project Data Form, Project Description, Data Management Plan, Postdoctoral Research Mentoring Plan (if applicable), Institutional Data Narrative, Faculty Research Plan (if applicable), Student Mentoring Plan (if applicable), Prior NSF Support, and Letters of Collaboration, as appropriate.

## **BUDGET**

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**32. Where can I find information about preparing a budget for a proposal?**

Instructions for proposal preparation may be found in the current solicitation ([NSF 22-545](#)) and in the NSF PAPPG (Chapter II.C.2.g.).

**33. Can students be supported?**

Yes. Financial support may be provided to students under HSI Program projects.

**34. What if my institution does not have a negotiated indirect cost (F&A) rate?**

Proposers that do not have a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a cognizant Federal agency (see 2 CFR 200.414(f)) should refer to the current NSF PAPPG (Chapter II.C.2.g.viii and Chapter X.D) for guidance.

## PROJECT EVALUATION

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**35. Can NSF recommend an evaluator, behavioral or social scientist, or a STEM education researcher to bring into our team? How do I find this expertise?**

No, NSF staff do not make recommendations for evaluators. A web search will provide links to associations and other organizations that provide evaluation services.

Evaluators from within your institution but external to the proposed project are also allowed. Per the current HSI Program solicitation ([NSF 22-545](#)), an evaluator may be employed by the project's home institution as long as the evaluator works in a separate organizational unit (e.g., a different department) that has a different reporting line than that of the project's home unit.

**36. Can the project's evaluator be a PI on the project?**

No, a PI cannot be an evaluator on the same HSI Program project. Project evaluation must be conducted by a third party that is independent of the project; however, the evaluator can be internal to the institution.

**37. Will we need Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of the evaluation activities and instruments described in our proposal?**

While a proposal can be reviewed without IRB approval, projects involving human subjects cannot be awarded until approval from the IRB is received or there is an IRB determination that the project is exempt from review. More information about this issue can be found in the current NSF PAPPG (Chapter II.D.5). The official NSF version of Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 690.101-124 is available at <https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/docs/45cfr690.pdf>.

**38. Does my project have to include both a research plan and project evaluation plan?**

Yes, if you are submitting to the IEP or ITP Track. PPP Track proposals does not require a research plan. Proposals to all three tracks should include a section on project evaluation that describes how the project will assess progress, document outcomes, and evaluate success in achieving its stated goal(s).

## CONFERENCE PROPOSALS

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**39. If I wanted to submit a conference proposal what are the requirements?**

The current NSF PAPPG (Chapter II.D.9) provides information on what elements must be included in the Conference proposal. Conference proposals are accepted at any time. Prospective conference proposal submitters are encouraged to contact HSI Program staff to discuss their ideas.