



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 23-033

ExLENT - Experiential Learning for Emerging and Novel Technologies Program (NSF 23-507)

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A. GENERAL INFORMATION

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

Detailed proposal preparation instructions specific to the ExLENT Program (including deviations from the NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide ([PAPPG](#)), can be found in the current solicitation ([NSF 23-507](#)) under section "V. Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions" subsection "A. Proposal Preparation Instructions". Proposals submitted to NSF must be submitted via Research.gov or Grants.gov. Further information on each system is available in [NSF PAPPG](#) (Chapter I.A).

2. **Is there an ExLENT email newsletter for up-to-date information? If so, how can I join?**

Enter your email address [here](#). You will then be signed up to receive our updates on ExLENT.

3. **What support is available for prospective Principal Investigators (PIs)?**

The ExLENT Program team supports potential PIs in a variety of ways including providing these FAQs, discussing one-pagers, offering webinars, and hosting office hours for PIs as submission dates approach. Please check the NSF ExLENT 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 written description of my idea?**

Yes. Sharing a description that outlines the core issues you would address in your proposal is a good way to initiate a conversation with an ExLENT Program Officer. We recommend limiting this to one page.

B. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

5. **How do I know if my organization is eligible to apply to one of the ExLENT Program's Tracks?**

As specified in the solicitation, the categories of proposers eligible to submit to this solicitation are identified in Chapter I.E of the PAPPG. In particular, the ExLENT program encourages proposals from:

- U.S.-based non-profit, non-academic organizations
- U.S.-based for-profit organizations
- State and Local Governments entities interested in workforce development and education
- Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) – Two- and four-year IHEs (including community colleges and Minority-Serving Institutions) accredited in, and having a campus located in the U.S.

When in doubt, please contact an ExLENT staff at ExLENT@nsf.gov.

6. **Does my organization need to be registered in SAM.gov to submit a proposal?**

Yes, SAM registration is required to submit a full proposal. We recommend you begin the registration process as soon as possible as registration of a new entity in SAM.gov can take many weeks. This program will not make any exceptions for proposers who are unable to obtain a Unique Entity ID.

7. **Are other Federal agencies, National Laboratories or Federally Funded R&D Centers ([FFRDCs](#)) eligible for funding?**

Refer to Chapter I.E of the PAPPG for guidance about the eligibility of other Federal agencies to submit proposals to NSF. While NSF does not normally support research or education activities by scientists, engineers or educators employed by Federal

agencies, national labs or FFRDCs, there are exceptions outlined in the [PAPPG](#). If the proposer thinks their project meets one of these exceptions, then they should contact a cognizant NSF Program Officer at ExLENT@nsf.gov before preparing a proposal for submission.

C. PARTNERSHIPS

8. **Can you submit a proposal without a partner?**

No. The ExLENT program expects proposals will involve partnerships between appropriate stakeholders committed to an integrated, collaborative network to best support participants. Multi-sector partnerships that leverage diverse perspectives and varied expertise are encouraged.

9. **Is there a limit to the number of partners that can be on a proposal?**

No. There is no limit to the number of partners. The number and type of partners should be appropriate for the scope of the project.

10. **Can a non-profit be the lead organization and have partners in the private sector?**

Yes, an ExLENT project can be led by a non-profit organization. Partner organizations may include private sector partners. Partner organizations may also include industry, government, academic, and/or other non-profit entities.

11. **Is a partnership between two organizations of the same type (i.e., two Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) or two non-profits) possible?**

Yes. It is up to the proposer to determine which partners are best suited to carry out the activities of the project.

12. **Should partners submit collaborative proposals or a single proposal with subawards?**

Because the ExLENT program expects that projects will involve at least two partners, proposals will represent an integrated collaborative effort. Proposals may be submitted 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 (lead institution links the separate awards in Research.gov). Potential PIs should refer to Chapter II.E of the [PAPPG](#) for more information on these two options.

13. **Can a non-academic organization be the lead organization on a proposal?**

Yes.

14. Does an ExLENT project have to include all the following as partners – academic institutions, for-profits, non-profit, and state/local/tribal governments?

No, your project should only include partners that are needed to help you achieve your project's goals.

D. PROPOSAL PREPARATION

15. Is NSF providing a specified proposal format or templates?

The ExLENT Program solicitation ([NSF 23-507](#)) provides an outline of the content needed in an ExLENT proposal. The Project Description section of a proposal should include a project overview, a description of experiential learning activities, a collaborative partnership plan, how community will be built via a cohort model, how the project will build an inclusive and diverse STEM workforce, how the project will be sustained and how it could be scalable, an evaluation plan, how the project will generate knowledge, how the project will contribute to broader impacts, and a description of results from prior NSF support (if applicable).

16. What are the required elements of a proposal?

The current NSF [PAPPG](#) (Chapter II.D.2.) provides general instructions on all required sections of any NSF proposal. The ExLENT Program solicitation identifies additional supplementary documentation that must be included with your proposal. Please refer to the current solicitation ([NSF 23-507](#)) for more information.

17. Can NSF recommend an evaluator, behavioral or social scientist, or a STEM education researcher to help us build an evaluation plan?

No. A web search will provide links to associations and other organizations that provide evaluation services.

18. Who should submit letters of collaboration?

All letters of collaboration should follow current NSF [PAPPG](#) guidelines (Chapter II. D.2) except where otherwise noted in the current solicitation. The content of the letters should be tailored to the project. Letters of collaboration are required from each partner, indicating the partner's commitment and role in the proposed activities. 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.

19. Are you expecting a proposal to address all the tracks of the ExLENT program?

No. The ExLENT program provides three tracks to best support the broad range of learners: 1) Pivots, 2) Beginnings and 3) Explorations. A proposal may address one or more of these tracks; we anticipate projects will likely target just one track. Regardless of track, proposals should identify the type(s) of participants they seek to support and provide the developmentally appropriate training, support, and mentorship activities.

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

The NSF supports research involving [human subjects](#) when the project has been certified by a responsible party to be in compliance with the federal government's "Common Rule" for the protection of human subjects. More information can be found in the current NSF [PAPPG](#) (Chapter II.E.5). [Here](#) is the official NSF version of Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 690.101-124.

21. Are the emerging technology fields limited to the ones listed in the solicitation?

The ExLENT program is focused on emerging and novel technologies. There is room to move beyond the emerging technologies list provided by Congress in the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 and the examples that are included in the ExLENT solicitation [NSF 23-507](#) (e.g., advanced manufacturing, advanced wireless, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, quantum information science, semiconductors, and microelectronics). Proposals should make the case that the proposed technology fits within the scope of "emerging" or "novel."

22. Who might we focus on as participants of our project?

The program is meant for a wide and diverse range of participants, this includes students, adult learners, current employees, etc. When considering your track, think about the participants you intend to serve and how you can best support their career goals and aspirations. And finally, consider how to increase participation of populations underrepresented in their pursuit of STEM careers as described in the [Vision 2030 Report](#) from the National Science Board.

E. BUDGET

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

Instructions for proposal preparation may be found in the current solicitation ([NSF 23-507](#)) and in the NSF [PAPPG](#) (Chapter II.D.2.).

24. What if my organization or institution does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate?

Proposers that have never received a NICRA (Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement) should consult the current NSF [PAPPG](#) (Chapter II.D.2).