



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 23-087

Dear Colleague Letter: Catalyzing Institutional Change to Support Greater Equity, Inclusion, and Access in STEM Academic Careers and Advanced Degree Attainment

April 11, 2023

Dear Colleagues:

Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) faculty across the country still do not reflect the gender, racial, and ethnic diversity of the country or of the students graduating with STEM doctoral degreesⁱ despite decades of gains in undergraduate and graduate enrollment in STEM.ⁱⁱ The NSF institutional change programs, the [Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate \(AGEP\)](#) and the [ADVANCE: Organizational Change for Gender Equity in STEM Academic Professions \(ADVANCE\)](#) encourage submission of proposals from all eligible institutions of higher education (IHEs), especially minority-serving institutions, to address faculty gender, racial, and ethnic underrepresentation of STEM faculty. While the AGEP program focuses primarily on racial and ethnic equity and the ADVANCE program's primary focus is gender equity, all ADVANCE and AGEP proposals are expected to take an intersectional perspective, as described in the program solicitations, to implement systemic change efforts and address equity. Language in both program solicitations acknowledges that there are additional social identities that intersect with gender, race, and ethnicity that may also be important to consider when designing and implementing systemic change and equity work. These social identities include, but are not limited to, being a member of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Agender (LGBTQIA+) community and/or identifying as having a disability.

With this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL), the NSF AGEP and ADVANCE programs seek to encourage several types of submissions in support of goals articulated in the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (Public Law. 117-167). Section 10329, *Support for Increasing Diversity Among Stem Faculty at Institutions of Higher Education*, authorizes NSF to make awards to institutions of higher education for the development and assessment of innovative reform efforts designed to increase the recruitment, retention, and advancement of individuals from underrepresented minority groups in academic STEM careers.

- **Catalyst proposals:** (*AGEP Catalyst Alliances* and *ADVANCE Catalysts*) Catalyst proposals are intended to facilitate long-term systemic and culture change within institutions of higher education. This is accomplished by providing grant support to undertake institutional self-assessment work to identify systemic barriers to equity for all genders, races, and ethnicities in STEM academic career pathways and careers. The *Catalyst* tracks support the collection and analysis of institutional data to identify systemic inequities and to identify potential systemic change solutions to the inequities. This opportunity should be of interest to institutions that do not already have institutional research offices to support the collection and analysis of institutional data. Both ADVANCE and AGEP include STEM faculty, while AGEP also includes graduate students and postdoctoral trainees in the scope of the program. In the AGEP program, a *Catalyst Alliance* is the first step in a pathway to an *Institutional Transformation Alliance (ITA)*, whereas in ADVANCE, a *Catalyst* is optional on the path to the institutional transformation opportunities (*Adaptation or Institutional Transformation*).
- **Supplements:** IHEs with current AGEP or ADVANCE grants may apply for supplements to better focus on the intersection of gender, race, and ethnicity as allowed in both program solicitations. For example, a current ADVANCE or AGEP grantee could request funds to bring in individuals with intersectional expertise to advise the project on how to ensure the activities and project evaluation are designed with an intersectional lens. The AGEP program also welcomes supplemental funding requests to add graduate students, postdoctoral research scholars, staff, and/or early career faculty who will contribute to advancing institutional and systemic changes in policies and practices.
- **Conferences:** ADVANCE and AGEP also encourage conference and workshop proposals that are designed to meet goals of the ADVANCE and AGEP programs. For example, conferences may be designed to train practitioners and researchers on intersectionality and/or systemic change, or to develop tools to support the implementation of intersectional equity efforts, or to develop metrics for intersectional and systemic change evaluation.

A webinar on this DCL will be held on April 27, 2023, 3:00-4:30pm ET. Register for the webinar [here](#). The webinar will be recorded and posted on the NSF ADVANCE and AGEP program webpages.

Please contact the program office to discuss your ideas for a proposal before submitting. For ADVANCE, please use ADVANCE@nsf.gov. For AGEP supplement ideas, please contact the cognizant program officer for your current award. For AGEP Catalyst and conference proposal ideas please contact Dr. Carrie Hall at carhall@nsf.gov.

Proposals must be submitted in Research.gov and must be responsive to the guidelines in the NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide ([NSF 23-1](#)) and the ADVANCE or AGEP program solicitations. Proposers should select EDU>EES>AGEP Program ([NSF 21-](#)

576) or EDU>EES>ADVANCE Program (NSF 20-554) when selecting where to apply.

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ⁱ National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, *Survey of Doctorate Recipients*, 2017. <http://ncesdata.nsf.gov/doctoratework/2017/>.

ⁱⁱ National Science Board, National Science Foundation. 2021. *The STEM Labor Force of Today: Scientists, Engineers and Skilled Technical Workers. Science and Engineering Indicators 2022*. NSB-2021-2. Alexandria, VA. Available at <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsb20212>.