Dear Colleague Letter: Catalyzing Human-Centered Solutions through Research and Innovation in Science, the Environment and Society

May 9, 2023

Dear Colleagues:

The National Science Foundation (NSF) seeks to build research capacity and infrastructure to address complex and compounding national and global crises whose solutions require a human-centered approach. To help generate effective and long-lasting solutions that benefit the U.S. public, NSF is providing this funding opportunity to inform possible future Centers for Research and Innovation in Science, the Environment and Society (CRISES).

The envisioned centers will catalyze new research and research-based innovations to address seemingly intractable problems that confront our society. They will develop evidence-based solutions that address fundamental quality-of-life issues, such as those involving the environment, extreme weather and sustainability; workforce and the economy; equity and access to opportunities; and well-being.

This funding opportunity is led by NSF's Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) in partnership with NSF's directorates for Engineering (ENG) and Geosciences (GEO).

SBE supports research to understand the social and behavioral aspects of our rapidly changing world and how these issues are affected by our social, economic and natural environments. Fundamental and use-inspired research supported by the directorate advances our understanding of people, organizations and society, while revealing emerging
opportunities to address challenges affecting our ability to live healthy and productive lives.

BACKGROUND

Crises abound throughout the world today. Ranging from floods, droughts, wildland fires and biodiversity loss as a result of extreme weather; to genocide, famine, war and group conflict; to epidemics of suicide, substance abuse and mental illness. From the personal to the collective, there are many profound challenges that undermine the success and sustainability of our society. In all these cases, human beings and their behavior play direct roles in causing crises and in contributing to addressing them.

Innovations in the human-centered sciences—those focusing on people—can improve well-being and our ability to thrive. Discoveries and findings from these areas of research can address the problems associated with community resilience, environmental sustainability, group and regional conflict, prejudice, poverty, pandemics, crime, violence and more.

Researchers studying crises may come from many disciplines within the social, behavioral and economic sciences, including decision sciences, risk analysis, policy and management studies, economics, psychology, geographic sciences and more. Although they draw from different theoretical perspectives and varied methodological tools, they all strive to improve our understanding of human-centered actions and behaviors.

This opportunity supports researchers in the social, behavioral and economic sciences who use empirical methods to grapple with crises that impact individuals, families, organizations, regions, nations or our planet. The Centers for Research in Science, the Environment and Society initiative (CRISES) invites proposals to take the first steps toward developing large-scale interdisciplinary research centers that will address today’s crises and ultimately enhance people’s quality of life.

TYPES OF PROPOSALS AND AWARD SCOPE

Through this funding opportunity, NSF seeks to invest in ideas that can potentially serve as the basis for a larger, center-scale activity. This DCL is the first step in that process.

NSF supports a variety of centers that contribute to its mission and goals. Centers leverage opportunities in science, engineering and technology when the complexity of the research program or the resources needed to solve the problem require greater scope, scale, duration, equipment, research infrastructure, facilities and people. Centers are a principal means by which NSF fosters interdisciplinary research.

In this first call, NSF invites proposals of the following types that will bring together experts across disciplines to seed ideas and help inform the possible full-scale implementation of a CRISES center:
• Conference proposals for up to $100,000.
• Planning proposals for up to $100,000.

Proposals must include the following:

• A lead principal investigator who is a social, behavioral or economic scientist (with a
degree in the SBE sciences or significant publications in SBE journals).
• A focus on at least one program area currently supported by the SBE directorate.
• Planned activities that will bring together experts from a range of disciplines to explore
the creation of a center to study and develop solutions to one or more pressing societal
issues.

Additional principal investigators included in proposals can be experts in other disciplines.
Given overlapping interests focusing on developing societal and environmental resilience, co-
investigators from fields within engineering or the geosciences are encouraged. Proposals
must demonstrate an interdisciplinary approach beyond that of any single disciplinary
program or NSF directorate.

NSF anticipates funding up to 12 awards through this opportunity, subject to the availability of
funds and the quality of proposals received.

PROPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the guidelines contained in
the NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG). Guidance on the
preparation and submission of planning proposals is contained in PAPPG Chapter II.F.1 and
guidance on conference proposals is provided in PAPPG Chapter II.F.9.

• The target date for full proposal submissions for both types of proposals is 5 p.m.
• Proposals must be submitted to the CRISES program description (PD 23-265Y) via
  Research.gov or Grants.gov.
• Proposal titles should start with "Planning: CRISES:" or “Conference: CRISES:”.

Investigators who expect to submit after the target date should communicate with the
program ahead of the target and include that communication in their proposal as a
supplementary document.

NSF anticipates that a few awards will be made in the summer of 2023, with the rest being
made in the fall of 2023.

Additional Instructions for Planning Proposals
Prior to submission of a planning proposal, prospective PIs are required to submit a research
concept outline of up to two pages that includes the project title, team members, institutions involved and a summary of the project concept. Concept outlines should be submitted by email to NSF_CRISES_Program@nsf.gov by May 26, 2023. To ensure proper processing, the subject line of the email should begin with: "Planning: CRISES:”. NSF program directors will review the concept outlines and will authorize PIs of those that fall within the scope of this DCL to submit a full proposal. The email confirming approval to submit a planning proposal must be uploaded in the “Program Officer Concurrence Email” section of Research.gov or as a supplementary document in Grants.gov.

POINT OF CONTACT

Questions about this funding opportunity should be directed to NSF_CRISES_Program@nsf.gov.

Sincerely,

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