



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
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NSF 24-012

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the NSF Earth Sciences Postdoctoral Fellowships (EAR-PF) Program

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1. Should I submit my proposal as an individual or can I submit through a university or institution?

EAR Postdoctoral Fellowships are awards to individuals. Thus, proposals must be submitted directly by the fellowship candidate to NSF. See Section V.A of the EAR-PF program solicitation for specific guidance on proposal preparation and submission.

2. Do I need to be affiliated with the postdoctoral institution at the time of submission?

No, proposers do not need to be affiliated with the host institution at the time of submitting the proposal. However, candidates must identify a **primary** host institution with which they will be affiliated by the time of the award. The scientific mentor must be affiliated with the primary host institution. The scientific mentor(s) must be identified in the proposal (please refer to the EAR-PF program solicitation for specific guidance).

3. I am already a postdoctoral fellow or would like to continue at the institution where I will complete my PhD. Can I propose to continue my fellowship at my current institution?

Yes, you may propose to stay at your current institution if you meet all eligibility criteria as listed in the solicitation at the time of submission, including: (1) have been at this institution for at least 12 months at the time of submission; (2) present a strong justification and clearly explain the benefits of this choice to their research and professional development goals; and (3) have two scientific mentors, one at the hosting institution and a second mentor at a different institution who is a new collaborator with the proposer.

Fellowship submissions that propose to continue at the proposer's current institution must engage a second mentor and must provide separate host institution letters from the primary host institution and the second mentor's institution (see below for more information). Proposals with more than one host institution that do not include separate letters from each of the host institutions will be returned without review.

4. **Can I have more than one scientific mentor? If yes, do they have to be at the same institution?**

Yes, you may have more than one scientific mentor but you must justify your choice of mentors within the project description. If you propose to have more than one scientific mentor, they may be at the same institution or at different institutions.

Your proposal must include a host institution letter from each host institution. Host institution letters must be provided by each host institution and signed by the scientific mentor(s) and department chair (or equivalent) at that institution. Please keep in mind that a scientific mentor plays a very different role from collaborators. The scientific mentor(s), at the location of work, will provide mentoring and guidance with research and professional development activities. See the [EAR-PF Solicitation](#) for specific requirements for host institution letters.

5. **What should be included in the host institution letter(s)?**

As stated above, a separate host institution letter is required from each of the mentors' institutions. That is, if you propose to have mentors from two different institutions or to hold the fellowship at two institutions during the tenure of the fellowship, each mentor must submit a Host Institution Letter signed by the proposed mentor(s) and the chair of the department (or equivalent) at that institution. The letter(s) should:

- certify that the submitted proposal has been read and approved by the proposed scientific mentor(s);
- certify that adequate facilities and support will be provided for the fellow;
- include a mentoring plan that discusses the role the proposed scientific mentor(s) will play in the professional development of the fellow, and of the opportunities for training and research at the host institution(s) that will be of particular benefit to the fellow.

Proposals with more than one host institution that do not include separate letters from each of the host institutions will be returned without review.

6. **Do I need a separate Postdoctoral mentoring plan?**

No, a postdoctoral mentoring plan is not required for EAR-PF proposals. Instead, the Host Institution Letter(s) should address research and professional development of the fellow, including mentoring.

7. **Can I submit letters of collaboration? Are they required?**

You may wish to document collaborative arrangements of significance to the proposal through Letters of Collaboration (see the [NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures](#)

Guide (PAPPG) Chapter II.D.2). Letters of collaboration should be limited to stating the intent to collaborate and should not contain endorsements or evaluation of the proposed project. Letters of collaboration must adhere to the language recommended in the PAPPG, noted below.

"If the proposal submitted by Dr. *[insert the full name of the Principal Investigator]* entitled *[insert the proposal title]* is selected for funding by NSF, it is my intent to collaborate and/or commit resources as detailed in the Project Description or the Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources section of the proposal."

If you have letters of collaboration, they should be uploaded as part of the "Other Supplementary Documents" section of the proposal.

Letters of collaboration are not required.

8. Can I submit letters of support, letters of reference or recommendation letters?

No, the EAR Postdoctoral Fellowship program does not accept letters of support, letters of reference or recommendation letters. Proposals that contain letters of support, letters of reference or recommendation letters may be returned without review.

9. Can I choose a foreign host institution (and a mentor at that site) for my postdoctoral work?

Yes, you may choose to conduct the fellowship at an appropriate foreign host institution.

10. I do not have my dissertation defense scheduled. What is the latest date I could defend and still be eligible to apply?

You can submit a proposal as a graduate student. If the fellowship is awarded, your PhD degree must be conferred and you must provide certification of PhD completion. The EAR-PF program will provide you with a form to certify completion upon request. If you are selected as a Postdoctoral Fellow, you will be expected to start the fellowship within one year after notification of your selection.

11. May I be on a temporary visa when I submit a proposal?

No, the proposer must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident at the time of proposal submission. If you are on a temporary visa you may want to consider partnering with a scientist or group at a US institution to submit a standard research proposal where you are identified as the postdoc working in the project. These standard research proposals should be submitted to the appropriate program in the appropriate directorate at NSF (not the EAR-PF program).

12. **What Collaborators and Other Affiliations (COA) forms do I need to include and where do they belong?**

- COA information, using the [instructions and spreadsheet template](#) as described in the PAPPG, is required for the Postdoctoral Scholar and the proposed scientific mentor(s). See Section V.A of the EAR-PF program solicitation for specific guidance about including the COA information in the proposal.
- As specified in the program solicitation, COA information for your Ph.D. advisor **must** be uploaded into the Additional Single Copy Documents section using the [instructions and spreadsheet template](#) as described in the PAPPG. The COA information for your Ph.D. advisor must be converted to PDF before uploading.

13. **Do I need to upload a list of suggested reviewers?**

A list of suggested reviewers who are not current collaborators in the submitted COA information lists is appreciated but not required. Suggested reviewers should be included in Additional Single Copy Documents section of the proposal.

14. **What biographical sketches must I include? Do I need to submit the biographical sketches of my PhD advisor and scientific mentor?**

You should **only** provide your own Biographical Sketch (limited to three pages) created using SciENcv ([Science Experts Network Curriculum Vitae](#)), which will produce an NSF-compliant PDF version. Do not include **any** other biographical sketches [for PhD advisor, scientific mentor(s), or collaborators]. The only biographical sketch that you should submit is your own.

15. **What other documents are required for submission?**

Proposals must include all of the required sections of a full research proposal submitted to NSF as specified in Chapter II.D.2 of the PAPPG. Note the following deviations from the PAPPG as outlined in the EAR-PF solicitation:

Project Summary must name the proposed scientific mentor(s), proposed host institution(s), and EAR disciplinary program (or programs – for interdisciplinary projects) most aligned with the research topic, and alignment with the research theme of this solicitation.

Project Description, including Results from Prior NSF Support, may not exceed 10 pages. Information about the required Results from Prior NSF Support section of the Project Description, including NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP) support, is contained in PAPPG Chapter II.D.2.

Data Management Plan: In addition to the guidance specified in the PAPPG, the fellow

is also required to adhere to the [EAR data policy](#) available on the NSF website.

Budget Justification: In Research.gov, the budget is prepopulated with the stipend and fellowship allowance. A budget justification must be included and must include the proposed spending plan for the fellowship allowance.

16. **Should I upload my PhD abstract?**

No. Although Research.gov has a section to upload your PhD abstract, this is not required or allowed by the EAR-PF program. Do not include your PhD abstract in your proposal submission.

17. **My research idea is not on the solicitation theme; may I submit a proposal on my research idea?**

No, the EAR-PF program will only accept proposals that fall within the research theme described in the solicitation.

18. **Can I submit a proposal to two NSF postdoctoral fellowship competitions at the same time?**

You may *not* submit the same (or similar) proposals to two different postdoctoral fellowship competitions to be reviewed at the same time. If you submit two identical or similar proposals to different postdoc fellowship programs, one or both proposals may be returned without review.

If the two proposals are on completely different topics, this *may* be allowable. If you would like to determine the amount of overlap, you will need to send a 1-2 paragraph summary of each proposal to both fellowship programs for review by program officers.

For further questions contact the program staff at: earpf@nsf.gov