

# Collaborations in Artificial Intelligence and Geosciences (CAIG)

## PROGRAM SOLICITATION

NSF 24-518



### National Science Foundation

Directorate for Geosciences

Division of Research, Innovation, Synergies, and Education

Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering

Division of Information and Intelligent Systems

Office of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure

Directorate for Mathematical and Physical Sciences

Division of Mathematical Sciences

**Full Proposal Deadline(s)** (due by 5 p.m. submitter's local time):

March 15, 2024

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND REVISION NOTES

The Collaborations in Artificial Intelligence and Geosciences (CAIG) program seeks to advance the development and adoption of innovative artificial intelligence (AI) methods to increase scientific understanding of the Earth system.

**Proposers are strongly encouraged to contact program director(s) from the list of Cognizant Program Officers**, in the Division(s)/Office(s) associated with the scientific discipline(s) for which the proposed AI developments would be applicable, to ascertain the appropriate focus and scope of intended proposal submissions. Proposers should also carefully review program requirements for this solicitation. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Awards are expected to fund interdisciplinary teams of 2-3 lead collaborating Senior Personnel and associated students, postdoctoral researchers, research software engineers, and/or similar staff (see Section III, Award Information).
- Projects may be up to 3 years in duration (see Section III, Award Information).
- An individual may be designated as Senior Personnel (which includes but is not limited to PI or co-PI) on at most two proposals (see Section IV, Eligibility Information).
- The solicitation limits eligible proposing organizations (see Section IV, Eligibility Information).
- To appropriately identify proposal submissions associated with this program, proposal titles should include "CAIG:" (see Section V.A, Proposal Preparation Instructions).
- Proposals submitted to this solicitation must address three Specific Requirements (see Section II, Program Description). Text addressing these Specific Requirements should be provided in the Project Description section of the proposal and should be organized under a single subheading for "Program Specific Requirements" or individual subheadings for each of the three requirements listed (see Section V.A, Proposal Preparation Instructions). In addition to being evaluated for Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts, proposals will be evaluated on how successfully they meet these three Specific Requirements (see Section VI.A, Merit Review Principles and Criteria).

Any proposal submitted in response to this solicitation should be submitted in accordance with the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) that is in effect for the relevant due date to which the proposal is being submitted. The NSF PAPPG is regularly revised and it is the responsibility of the proposer to ensure that the proposal meets the requirements specified in this solicitation and the applicable version of the PAPPG. Submitting a proposal prior to a specified deadline does not negate this requirement.

## SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### General Information

#### Program Title:

Collaborations in Artificial Intelligence and Geosciences (CAIG)

#### Synopsis of Program:

The Collaborations in Artificial Intelligence and Geosciences (CAIG) program seeks to advance the development and adoption of

innovative artificial intelligence (AI) methods to increase scientific understanding of the Earth system. The program supports projects that advance AI techniques and/or innovative uses of sophisticated or novel AI methods to enable significant breakthroughs in addressing geoscience research question(s). The program also supports efforts that increase adoption of innovative AI-driven approaches among geoscientists, including by expanding access to cyberinfrastructure (CI) and by building capacity for use of AI methods among diverse groups and institutions.

#### **Cognizant Program Officer(s):**

*Please note that the following information is current at the time of publishing. See program website for any updates to the points of contact.*

- Raleigh L. Martin, GEO/RISE, telephone: (703) 292-7199, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Sylvia J. Spengler, CISE/IIS, telephone: (703) 292-7347, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Marlon Pierce, CISE/OAC, telephone: (703) 292-7743, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Jodi Mead, MPS/DMS, telephone: (703) 292-7212, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Eva E. Zanzerkia, GEO/EAR, telephone: (703) 292-4734, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Joseph Carlin, GEO/OCE, telephone: (703) 292-8562, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Maria P. Womack, GEO/AGS, telephone: (703) 292-2620, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Marc Stieglitz, GEO/OPP, telephone: (703) 292-4354, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Sean C. Kennan, GEO/OCE, telephone: (703) 292-7575, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Eric DeWeaver, GEO/AGS, telephone: (703) 292-8527, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)

#### **Applicable Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):**

- 47.049 --- Mathematical and Physical Sciences
- 47.050 --- Geosciences
- 47.070 --- Computer and Information Science and Engineering

#### **Award Information**

**Anticipated Type of Award:** Standard Grant or Continuing Grant

**Estimated Number of Awards:** 10 to 15

The estimated number of awards indicates the number of projects (including collaborative awards) expected to be supported.

**Anticipated Funding Amount:** \$6,000,000 to \$10,000,000

The anticipated funding amount is the total for all awards through this program solicitation. Estimated program budget, number of awards, and average award size/duration are subject to the availability of funds.

#### **Eligibility Information**

##### **Who May Submit Proposals:**

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) - Two- and four-year IHEs (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in the US, acting on behalf of their faculty members. Special Instructions for International Branch Campuses of US IHEs: If the proposal includes funding to be provided to an international branch campus of a US institution of higher education (including through use of subawards and consultant arrangements), the proposer must explain the benefit(s) to the project of performance at the international branch campus, and justify why the project activities cannot be performed at the US campus.
- Non-profit, non-academic organizations: Independent museums, observatories, research laboratories, professional societies and similar organizations located in the U.S. that are directly associated with educational or research activities.
- Other Federal Agencies and Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs): Proposers must contact a program director from the list of Cognizant Program Officers before preparing a proposal for submission. NSF-sponsored FFRDCs may submit, provided that they are not including costs for which federal funds have already been awarded or are expected to be awarded.

##### **Who May Serve as PI:**

There are no restrictions or limits.

##### **Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:**

There are no restrictions or limits.

#### Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or co-PI: 2

An individual may be designated as Senior Personnel (which includes but is not limited to PI or co-PI) on at most two proposals. NSF's definition for "Senior Personnel" is provided in PAPPG Exhibit II-3.

**These eligibility constraints will be strictly enforced in order to treat everyone fairly and consistently.** In the event that an individual exceeds this limit, proposals received within the limit will be accepted based on earliest date and time of proposal submission (i.e., the first proposal received will be accepted, and the remainder will be returned without review). **No exceptions will be made.**

## Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions

### A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

- **Letters of Intent:** Not required
- **Preliminary Proposal Submission:** Not required
- **Full Proposals:**
  - Full Proposals submitted via Research.gov: *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) guidelines apply. The complete text of the PAPPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).
  - Full Proposals submitted via Grants.gov: *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov* guidelines apply (Note: The *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide* is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=grantsgovguide](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide)).

### B. Budgetary Information

- **Cost Sharing Requirements:**

Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.
- **Indirect Cost (F&A) Limitations:**

Not Applicable
- **Other Budgetary Limitations:**

Not Applicable

### C. Due Dates

- **Full Proposal Deadline(s)** (due by 5 p.m. submitter's local time):

March 15, 2024

## Proposal Review Information Criteria

### Merit Review Criteria:

National Science Board approved criteria. Additional merit review criteria apply. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.

## Award Administration Information

### Award Conditions:

Standard NSF award conditions apply.

### Reporting Requirements:

Standard NSF reporting requirements apply.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The NSF Directorate for Geosciences (GEO), in partnership with the Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE) and the Directorate for Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS), seeks to address grand challenge problems across the geosciences through innovations in artificial intelligence (AI) methods. In this solicitation, the geosciences collectively refer to the academic research communities supported in the Divisions of Atmosphere and Geospace (AGS), Earth (EAR), and Ocean (OCE) Sciences, and in the Office of Polar Programs (OPP), within GEO.

AI is intelligence that comes from any computational tool, including logic and decision trees. AI approaches include machine learning (ML) methods that use optimization and statistical techniques to enable machines to perform tasks and make discoveries after exposure to data. These are powerful tools for analyzing large and complex datasets, developing physical models, expediting computation or scaling between models, or designing and deploying sensor networks.

AI methods have been identified as increasingly important tools for addressing grand challenge problems in the geosciences. The 2022 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAEM) report, [Next Generation Earth Systems Science at the National Science Foundation](#), identifies the need for an integrated approach to observation, computation, and modeling to accelerate convergence for significant scientific, societal, and educational goals. The NAEM report identifies opportunities and challenges in applying AI approaches to analysis of "big data" from observations and model outputs to advance understanding of complex Earth systems. Distinct methodological needs associated with understanding Earth systems and using geosciences data can also inform and inspire new developments in AI, and AI-enabled research will require a workforce prepared to understand, use, and develop appropriate AI techniques.

Another set of emerging issues for innovative use of AI in the geosciences is bottlenecks to accessing these techniques. On a technical level, AI models are often trained and tested on large datasets, which require data curation, storage, and specialized computational resources, such as graphics processing units (GPUs). The Office of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure (OAC) in the CISE Directorate supports shared cyberinfrastructure (CI) resources in this area (e.g., through the Advanced Cyberinfrastructure Coordination Ecosystem: Services & Support (ACCESS) program and its associated resource providers) and looks to inform a possible future [National AI Research Resource](#) (NAIRR). Geoscientists have not yet realized the full potential of these shared and existing resources to carry out their AI applications. Motivated by this issue, NSF's [National Discovery Cloud for Climate](#) (NDC-C) initiative is seeking to federate advanced computing, data, software, and networking resources in order to democratize access to and improve the usability of CI for climate-related science and engineering.

These resource access challenges are compounded by limited availability of educational opportunities for geoscientists at all career stages to build capacity for adopting rapidly evolving AI capabilities into their research workflows. These technical and capacity bottlenecks may be having the effect of restricting use of advanced AI to only the most well-resourced individuals and institutions. These bottlenecks may also hinder the ability of geoscientists to comprehend and evaluate AI-enabled research results, with potential implications for interpretability and reproducibility.

## II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Collaborations in Artificial Intelligence and Geosciences (CAIG) program seeks to advance the development and adoption of innovative artificial intelligence (AI) methods to increase scientific understanding of the Earth system. The program supports projects that advance AI techniques and/or innovative uses of sophisticated AI methods to enable significant breakthroughs in addressing geoscience research question(s). The program also supports efforts that overcome technical and/or capacity bottlenecks to increase adoption of innovative AI-driven approaches

among geoscientists, including by expanding access to cyberinfrastructure (CI) for AI-ready analyses, and by building capacity for use of AI methods among diverse groups and institutions.

A primary goal of this solicitation is to promote partnership between geoscientists and experts in mathematical sciences or computer science to address cutting-edge research that pushes the boundaries of the geosciences and AI. As such, this solicitation is a partnership between GEO's Division of Research, Innovation, Synergies, and Education (GEO/RISE), CISE's Division of Information and Intelligent Systems (CISE/IIS) and Office of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure (CISE/OAC), and MPS's Division of Mathematical Sciences (MPS/DMS).

### **Major Priorities**

This solicitation encourages submission of proposals in response to one or more of the following Major Priorities:

1. Enabling significant breakthroughs in geosciences research question(s) through advancement in AI techniques and/or innovative uses of sophisticated AI methods to overcome geoscience research challenge(s) or bottleneck(s).
2. Expanding access to and usability of geosciences data and existing cyberinfrastructure (CI), including for training datasets and benchmarking, to enable innovative AI-driven approaches in the geosciences. This includes (but is not limited to) efforts to federate and provide access to CI for research on the intersection of AI and climate science.
3. Building workforce capacity for using advanced AI methods in the geosciences through educational and broadening participation activities, with an emphasis on inclusion of historically underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and under-served institutions, e.g., "non-R1" minority serving institutions (MSIs), two-year colleges (2YCs), primarily undergraduate institutions (PUIs), and emerging research and masters level institutions (see [Carnegie Classification](#) and [Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System](#)). Activities may address geoscience workforce development across a range of career stages for which increased expertise on AI methods will contribute to geoscience research discoveries. Capacity-building activities should be pursued in tandem with activities for AI innovation and/or accessibility for the geosciences.

Beyond these major priorities, proposers may wish to consider alternative programs:

- Proposers pursuing straightforward applications of existing or "off the shelf" AI methods to address geoscience questions should consider proposal submission to the appropriate disciplinary science programs within GEO.
- Proposers focusing on foundational AI research that uses geoscience applications or datasets only for testing purposes should consider proposal submission to programs within CISE/IIS or MPS/DMS, depending on the specific use cases.
- Proposers seeking to build new CI should consider proposal submission to Cyberinfrastructure for Sustained Scientific Innovation (CSSI) or related programs in CISE/OAC.
- Proposers primarily focused on improving CI literacy and skills development should consider proposal submission to the Training-based Workforce Development for Advanced Cyberinfrastructure (CyberTraining) program.

For further information on related opportunities, see the GEO Cyberinfrastructure (GEO CI) web page: <https://www.nsf.gov/geo/geo-ci/index.jsp>.

**Proposers are strongly encouraged to contact program director(s) from the list of Cognizant Program Officers**, in the Division(s)/Office(s) associated with the scientific discipline(s) for which the proposed AI developments would be applicable, to ascertain the appropriate focus and scope of intended proposal submissions.

### **Specific Requirements:**

In addition to responding to one or more of the Major Priorities described above, proposals submitted to this solicitation **must** address all three of the following Specific Requirements. Text addressing these Specific Requirements should be provided in the Project Description section of the proposal and should be organized under a single subheading for "Program Specific Requirements" or individual subheadings for each of the three requirements listed (see Section V.A, Proposal Preparation Instructions). In addition to being evaluated for Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts, proposals will be evaluated on how successfully they meet these requirements (see Section VI.A, Merit Review Principles and Criteria):

1. **Geosciences Advancement:** Proposals must explicitly identify motivating science drivers and address how the proposed activities will advance geosciences research and/or education in response to these drivers. Projects should demonstrate the potential to improve understanding of the Earth system through the use of AI approaches and/or to lower barriers for using these approaches by others in the geosciences.
2. **AI Impact:** Proposals must describe the novel integration of AI methods, including any development of new methods, and justify how proposed activities overcome significant methodological and/or capacity bottlenecks that inhibit research progress in the geosciences.
3. **Partnerships:** Proposed projects should consist of interdisciplinary teams of 2-3 lead collaborating Senior Personnel and associated students, postdoctoral researchers, research software engineers, and/or similar staff (see Section III, Award Information). Project teams should constitute meaningful partnerships between geoscientists and experts in AI, mathematics, statistics, computer science, and/or cyberinfrastructure. Proposals should identify planned mechanisms for developing these partnerships, how partnerships will support the intended Geosciences Advancement and AI Impact, and how the partnerships will benefit all project participants, including pathways for cross-training students and other researchers in the methods to be pursued.

### **Utilizing Shared Computing Resources:**

This solicitation does *not* support the development of new computer hardware capabilities or significant hardware acquisition, nor does it support projects that are primarily intended to develop new CI. PIs are encouraged to consider using the wide range of NSF-supported advanced shared computing resources for their computational needs, including the Advanced Cyberinfrastructure Coordination Ecosystem: Services & Support (ACCESS) program and its associated resource providers; the Partnership to Advance Throughput Computing (PATH) (<https://path-cc.io/>); and related initiatives through NSF's Office of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure. PAPPG Chapter II.E.7 provides additional information on accessing high-performance, cloud, and high-throughput computing resources, data infrastructure, or advanced visualization resources. In addition to these widely available computing resources, proposers may also request specific allocations for high-throughput computing and/or cloud computing in tandem with their proposal submission. This is described in further detail in the Proposal Preparation Instructions of this solicitation (Section V.A).

### III. AWARD INFORMATION

Awards are expected to fund interdisciplinary teams of 2-3 lead collaborating Senior Personnel and associated students, postdoctoral researchers, research software engineers, and/or similar staff.

Projects may be up to 3 years in duration. This program solicitation announces an initial 2024 competition for Collaborations in Artificial Intelligence and Geosciences (CAIG) proposals. Outcomes of this initial competition, including early results from funded projects, will inform possible future funding opportunities for CAIG.

### IV. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

#### Who May Submit Proposals:

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) - Two- and four-year IHEs (including community colleges) accredited in, and having a campus located in the US, acting on behalf of their faculty members. Special Instructions for International Branch Campuses of US IHEs: If the proposal includes funding to be provided to an international branch campus of a US institution of higher education (including through use of subawards and consultant arrangements), the proposer must explain the benefit(s) to the project of performance at the international branch campus, and justify why the project activities cannot be performed at the US campus.
- Non-profit, non-academic organizations: Independent museums, observatories, research laboratories, professional societies and similar organizations located in the U.S. that are directly associated with educational or research activities.
- Other Federal Agencies and Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs): Proposers must contact a program director from the list of Cognizant Program Officers before preparing a proposal for submission. NSF-sponsored FFRDCs may submit, provided that they are not including costs for which federal funds have already been awarded or are expected to be awarded.

#### Who May Serve as PI:

There are no restrictions or limits.

#### Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:

There are no restrictions or limits.

#### Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or co-PI: 2

An individual may be designated as Senior Personnel (which includes but is not limited to PI or co-PI) on at most two proposals. NSF's definition for "Senior Personnel" is provided in PAPPG Exhibit II-3.

**These eligibility constraints will be strictly enforced in order to treat everyone fairly and consistently.** In the event that an individual exceeds this limit, proposals received within the limit will be accepted based on earliest date and time of proposal submission (i.e., the first proposal received will be accepted, and the remainder will be returned without review). **No exceptions will be made.**

### V. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

#### A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

**Full Proposal Preparation Instructions:** Proposers may opt to submit proposals in response to this Program Solicitation via Research.gov or Grants.gov.

- Full Proposals submitted via Research.gov: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the general guidelines contained in the *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG). The complete text of the PAPPG is available electronically on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg). Paper copies of the PAPPG may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-8134 or by e-mail from [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov). The Prepare New Proposal setup will prompt you for the program solicitation number.
- Full proposals submitted via Grants.gov: Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation via Grants.gov should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov*. The complete text of the *NSF Grants.gov Application Guide* is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: ([https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=grantsgovguide](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=grantsgovguide)). To obtain copies of the Application Guide and Application Forms Package, click on the Apply tab on the Grants.gov site, then click on the Apply Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Application Instructions link and enter the funding opportunity number, (the program solicitation number without the NSF prefix) and press the Download Package button. Paper copies of the Grants.gov Application Guide also may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-8134 or by e-mail from [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov).

In determining which method to utilize in the electronic preparation and submission of the proposal, please note the following:

**Collaborative Proposals.** All collaborative proposals submitted as separate submissions from multiple organizations must be submitted via Research.gov. PAPPG Chapter II.E.3 provides additional information on collaborative proposals.

See PAPPG Chapter II.D.2 for guidance on the required sections of a full research proposal submitted to NSF. Please note that the proposal preparation instructions provided in this program solicitation may deviate from the PAPPG instructions.

**The following provides additional guidance beyond that contained in the PAPPG or NSF Grants.gov Application Guide.**

**Title:**

To appropriately identify proposal submissions associated with this program, proposal titles should include "CAIG:".

**Project Summary:**

If high-throughput computing (HTC) resources are being requested, then the keyword "HTCAccess" (one word without space) should be included at the end of the Overview section (before the section on Intellectual Merit) of the Project Summary page. Similarly, if cloud computing resources are being requested from CloudBank.org, then the keyword "CloudAccess" (one word without space) should be included at the end of the Overview section (before the section on Intellectual Merit) of the Project Summary page. More information on High-Throughput and Cloud Computing Resource requests, including additional proposal preparation requirements for these requests, is provided below.

**Project Description:**

All proposals must explicitly address within the Project Description how the project meets all three Specific Requirements listed in the Program Description of this solicitation (Section II). Text addressing these Specific Requirements should be provided in the Project Description section of the proposal and should be organized under a single subheading for "Program Specific Requirements" or individual subheadings for each of the three requirements listed.

**Supplementary Documentation:**

**High-Throughput Computing Resources:**

Proposals may request high-throughput computing (HTC) resources through the Partnership to Advance Throughput Computing (PATH) project supported by NSF.

Proposers should describe the request in a Supplementary Document no longer than two pages with a technical description of, and justification for, the requested HTC resources that includes (a) the expected number of self-contained tasks per ensemble – note that each task can be packaged into one or more batch job; (b) the resource requirements for each task type in the ensemble – for example, requirements for cores, memory, wall-time, and scratch space; (c) the expected number of ensembles; (d) the expected input and output data requirements for each task type; and (e) the expected number and size of shared input files within an ensemble – expected number of times each file is read per ensemble.

Proposers should include "HTCAccess" (one word without spaces) as a keyword on the Project Summary page, at the end of the Overview section (before the section on Intellectual Merit) if incorporating this request into the proposal. Proposers may visit the PATH credit accounts web page (see <https://path-cc.io/services/credit-accounts/>) for more information on the available HTC resources which can be allocated through this program.

**Cloud Computing Resources:**

Proposals may request cloud computing resources to use public clouds such as Amazon Web Services (AWS), Google Cloud Platform (GCP), IBM

Cloud, and Microsoft Azure. Cloud computing resources described in proposals may be obtained through an external cloud access entity (CloudBank) supported by NSF's [Enabling Access to Cloud Computing Resources for CISE Research and Education \(Cloud Access\) program](#).

Proposers should describe this request in a Supplementary Document including: (a) which public cloud providers will be used; (b) anticipated annual and total costs for accessing the desired cloud computing resources, based on pricing currently available from the public cloud computing providers; and (c) a technical description of, and justification for, the requested cloud computing resources. The proposal budget should not include the costs for accessing public cloud computing resources via CloudBank.

Proposers seeking CloudBank funds should include "CloudAccess" (one word without space) at the end of the list of keywords in the Project Summary (before the section on Intellectual Merit). Proposers may contact CloudBank (see <https://www.cloudbank.org/faq/>) for consultation on estimating the costs for using cloud computing resources.

## B. Budgetary Information

### Cost Sharing:

Inclusion of voluntary committed cost sharing is prohibited.

## C. Due Dates

- **Full Proposal Deadline(s)** (due by 5 p.m. submitter's local time):

March 15, 2024

## D. Research.gov/Grants.gov Requirements

### For Proposals Submitted Via Research.gov:

To prepare and submit a proposal via Research.gov, see detailed technical instructions available at: [https://www.research.gov/research-portal/appmanager/base/desktop?\\_nfpb=true&\\_pageLabel=research\\_node\\_display&\\_nodePath=/researchGov/Service/Desktop/ProposalPreparationandSubmission.html](https://www.research.gov/research-portal/appmanager/base/desktop?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=research_node_display&_nodePath=/researchGov/Service/Desktop/ProposalPreparationandSubmission.html). For Research.gov user support, call the Research.gov Help Desk at 1-800-381-1532 or e-mail [rgov@nsf.gov](mailto:rgov@nsf.gov). The Research.gov Help Desk answers general technical questions related to the use of the Research.gov system. Specific questions related to this program solicitation should be referred to the NSF program staff contact(s) listed in Section VIII of this funding opportunity.

### For Proposals Submitted Via Grants.gov:

Before using Grants.gov for the first time, each organization must register to create an institutional profile. Once registered, the applicant's organization can then apply for any federal grant on the Grants.gov website. Comprehensive information about using Grants.gov is available on the Grants.gov Applicant Resources webpage: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants.html>. In addition, the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide (see link in Section V.A) provides instructions regarding the technical preparation of proposals via Grants.gov. For Grants.gov user support, contact the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or by email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). The Grants.gov Contact Center answers general technical questions related to the use of Grants.gov. Specific questions related to this program solicitation should be referred to the NSF program staff contact(s) listed in Section VIII of this solicitation.

**Submitting the Proposal:** Once all documents have been completed, the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) must submit the application to Grants.gov and verify the desired funding opportunity and agency to which the application is submitted. The AOR must then sign and submit the application to Grants.gov. The completed application will be transferred to Research.gov for further processing.

The NSF [Grants.gov Proposal Processing in Research.gov informational page](#) provides submission guidance to applicants and links to helpful resources including the NSF [Grants.gov Application Guide](#), [Grants.gov Proposal Processing in Research.gov how-to guide](#), and [Grants.gov Submitted Proposals Frequently Asked Questions](#). Grants.gov proposals must pass all NSF pre-check and post-check validations in order to be accepted by Research.gov at NSF.

When submitting via Grants.gov, NSF strongly recommends applicants initiate proposal submission at least five business days in advance of a deadline to allow adequate time to address NSF compliance errors and resubmissions by 5:00 p.m. submitting organization's local time on the deadline. Please note that some errors cannot be corrected in Grants.gov. Once a proposal passes pre-checks but fails any post-check, an applicant can only correct and submit the in-progress proposal in Research.gov.

Proposers that submitted via Research.gov may use Research.gov to verify the status of their submission to NSF. For proposers that submitted via Grants.gov, until an application has been received and validated by NSF, the Authorized Organizational Representative may check the status of an



application on Grants.gov. After proposers have received an e-mail notification from NSF, Research.gov should be used to check the status of an application.

## VI. NSF PROPOSAL PROCESSING AND REVIEW PROCEDURES

Proposals received by NSF are assigned to the appropriate NSF program for acknowledgement and, if they meet NSF requirements, for review. All proposals are carefully reviewed by a scientist, engineer, or educator serving as an NSF Program Officer, and usually by three to ten other persons outside NSF either as *ad hoc* reviewers, panelists, or both, who are experts in the particular fields represented by the proposal. These reviewers are selected by Program Officers charged with oversight of the review process. Proposers are invited to suggest names of persons they believe are especially well qualified to review the proposal and/or persons they would prefer not review the proposal. These suggestions may serve as one source in the reviewer selection process at the Program Officer's discretion. Submission of such names, however, is optional. Care is taken to ensure that reviewers have no conflicts of interest with the proposal. In addition, Program Officers may obtain comments from site visits before recommending final action on proposals. Senior NSF staff further review recommendations for awards. A flowchart that depicts the entire NSF proposal and award process (and associated timeline) is included in PAPPG Exhibit III-1.

A comprehensive description of the Foundation's merit review process is available on the NSF website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit\\_review/](https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/).

Proposers should also be aware of core strategies that are essential to the fulfillment of NSF's mission, as articulated in *Leading the World in Discovery and Innovation, STEM Talent Development and the Delivery of Benefits from Research - NSF Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2022 - 2026*.

These strategies are integrated in the program planning and implementation process, of which proposal review is one part. NSF's mission is particularly well-implemented through the integration of research and education and broadening participation in NSF programs, projects, and activities.

One of the strategic objectives in support of NSF's mission is to foster integration of research and education through the programs, projects, and activities it supports at academic and research institutions. These institutions must recruit, train, and prepare a diverse STEM workforce to advance the frontiers of science and participate in the U.S. technology-based economy. NSF's contribution to the national innovation ecosystem is to provide cutting-edge research under the guidance of the Nation's most creative scientists and engineers. NSF also supports development of a strong science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce by investing in building the knowledge that informs improvements in STEM teaching and learning.

NSF's mission calls for the broadening of opportunities and expanding participation of groups, institutions, and geographic regions that are underrepresented in STEM disciplines, which is essential to the health and vitality of science and engineering. NSF is committed to this principle of diversity and deems it central to the programs, projects, and activities it considers and supports.

### A. Merit Review Principles and Criteria

The National Science Foundation strives to invest in a robust and diverse portfolio of projects that creates new knowledge and enables breakthroughs in understanding across all areas of science and engineering research and education. To identify which projects to support, NSF relies on a merit review process that incorporates consideration of both the technical aspects of a proposed project and its potential to contribute more broadly to advancing NSF's mission "to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense; and for other purposes." NSF makes every effort to conduct a fair, competitive, transparent merit review process for the selection of projects.

#### 1. Merit Review Principles

These principles are to be given due diligence by PIs and organizations when preparing proposals and managing projects, by reviewers when reading and evaluating proposals, and by NSF program staff when determining whether or not to recommend proposals for funding and while overseeing awards. Given that NSF is the primary federal agency charged with nurturing and supporting excellence in basic research and education, the following three principles apply:

- All NSF projects should be of the highest quality and have the potential to advance, if not transform, the frontiers of knowledge.
- NSF projects, in the aggregate, should contribute more broadly to achieving societal goals. These "Broader Impacts" may be accomplished through the research itself, through activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project. The project activities may be based on previously established and/or innovative methods and approaches, but in either case must be well justified.
- Meaningful assessment and evaluation of NSF funded projects should be based on appropriate metrics, keeping in mind the likely correlation between the effect of broader impacts and the resources provided to implement projects. If the size of the activity is limited, evaluation of that activity in isolation is not likely to be meaningful. Thus, assessing the effectiveness of these activities may best be done at a higher, more aggregated, level than the individual project.

With respect to the third principle, even if assessment of Broader Impacts outcomes for particular projects is done at an aggregated level, PIs are

expected to be accountable for carrying out the activities described in the funded project. Thus, individual projects should include clearly stated goals, specific descriptions of the activities that the PI intends to do, and a plan in place to document the outputs of those activities.

These three merit review principles provide the basis for the merit review criteria, as well as a context within which the users of the criteria can better understand their intent.

## 2. Merit Review Criteria

All NSF proposals are evaluated through use of the two National Science Board approved merit review criteria. In some instances, however, NSF will employ additional criteria as required to highlight the specific objectives of certain programs and activities.

The two merit review criteria are listed below. **Both** criteria are to be given **full consideration** during the review and decision-making processes; each criterion is necessary but neither, by itself, is sufficient. Therefore, proposers must fully address both criteria. (PAPPG Chapter II.D.2.d(i) contains additional information for use by proposers in development of the Project Description section of the proposal). Reviewers are strongly encouraged to review the criteria, including PAPPG Chapter II.D.2.d(i), prior to the review of a proposal.

When evaluating NSF proposals, reviewers will be asked to consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers will be asked to evaluate all proposals against two criteria:

- **Intellectual Merit:** The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and
- **Broader Impacts:** The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

The following elements should be considered in the review for both criteria:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to
  - a. Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
  - b. Benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?
2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
3. Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?
4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?
5. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through the activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project. NSF values the advancement of scientific knowledge and activities that contribute to achievement of societally relevant outcomes. Such outcomes include, but are not limited to: full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); improved STEM education and educator development at any level; increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology; improved well-being of individuals in society; development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce; increased partnerships between academia, industry, and others; improved national security; increased economic competitiveness of the United States; and enhanced infrastructure for research and education.

Proposers are reminded that reviewers will also be asked to review the Data Management Plan and the Postdoctoral Researcher Mentoring Plan, as appropriate.

### Additional Solicitation Specific Review Criteria

Proposals will also be evaluated on how successfully they meet the Specific Requirements of the Program Description for this solicitation (Section II):

1. **Geosciences Advancement:** How do the proposed activities contribute to advancing geosciences research and/or education in response to motivating science drivers?
2. **AI Impact:** What novel integration of AI is proposed and does it overcome significant methodological and/or capacity bottlenecks that inhibit research progress in the geosciences?
3. **Partnerships:** Does the proposal include mechanisms to develop meaningful interdisciplinary partnerships to support the intended Geosciences Advancement and AI Impact? Will partnerships benefit all project participants, including pathways for cross-training students and other researchers in the methods to be pursued?

## B. Review and Selection Process

Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation will be reviewed by Ad hoc Review and/or Panel Review.

Reviewers will be asked to evaluate proposals using two National Science Board approved merit review criteria and, if applicable, additional program specific criteria. A summary rating and accompanying narrative will generally be completed and submitted by each reviewer and/or panel. The Program Officer assigned to manage the proposal's review will consider the advice of reviewers and will formulate a recommendation.

After scientific, technical and programmatic review and consideration of appropriate factors, the NSF Program Officer recommends to the cognizant Division Director whether the proposal should be declined or recommended for award. NSF strives to be able to tell proposers whether their proposals have been declined or recommended for funding within six months. Large or particularly complex proposals or proposals from new recipients may require additional review and processing time. The time interval begins on the deadline or target date, or receipt date, whichever is later. The interval ends when the Division Director acts upon the Program Officer's recommendation.

After programmatic approval has been obtained, the proposals recommended for funding will be forwarded to the Division of Grants and Agreements or the Division of Acquisition and Cooperative Support for review of business, financial, and policy implications. After an administrative review has occurred, Grants and Agreements Officers perform the processing and issuance of a grant or other agreement. Proposers are cautioned that only a Grants and Agreements Officer may make commitments, obligations or awards on behalf of NSF or authorize the expenditure of funds. No commitment on the part of NSF should be inferred from technical or budgetary discussions with a NSF Program Officer. A Principal Investigator or organization that makes financial or personnel commitments in the absence of a grant or cooperative agreement signed by the NSF Grants and Agreements Officer does so at their own risk.

Once an award or declination decision has been made, Principal Investigators are provided feedback about their proposals. In all cases, reviews are treated as confidential documents. Verbatim copies of reviews, excluding the names of the reviewers or any reviewer-identifying information, are sent to the Principal Investigator/Project Director by the Program Officer. In addition, the proposer will receive an explanation of the decision to award or decline funding.

## **VII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**

### **A. Notification of the Award**

Notification of the award is made to *the submitting organization* by an NSF Grants and Agreements Officer. Organizations whose proposals are declined will be advised as promptly as possible by the cognizant NSF Program administering the program. Verbatim copies of reviews, not including the identity of the reviewer, will be provided automatically to the Principal Investigator. (See Section VI.B. for additional information on the review process.)

### **B. Award Conditions**

An NSF award consists of: (1) the award notice, which includes any special provisions applicable to the award and any numbered amendments thereto; (2) the budget, which indicates the amounts, by categories of expense, on which NSF has based its support (or otherwise communicates any specific approvals or disapprovals of proposed expenditures); (3) the proposal referenced in the award notice; (4) the applicable award conditions, such as Grant General Conditions (GC-1)\*; or Research Terms and Conditions\* and (5) any announcement or other NSF issuance that may be incorporated by reference in the award notice. Cooperative agreements also are administered in accordance with NSF Cooperative Agreement Financial and Administrative Terms and Conditions (CA-FATC) and the applicable Programmatic Terms and Conditions. NSF awards are electronically signed by an NSF Grants and Agreements Officer and transmitted electronically to the organization via e-mail.

\*These documents may be accessed electronically on NSF's Website at [https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/award\\_conditions.jsp?org=NSF](https://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/award_conditions.jsp?org=NSF). Paper copies may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-8134 or by e-mail from [nsfpubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nsfpubs@nsf.gov).

More comprehensive information on NSF Award Conditions and other important information on the administration of NSF awards is contained in the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) Chapter VII, available electronically on the NSF Website at [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).

### **Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

#### **Build America, Buy America**

As expressed in Executive Order 14005, [Ensuring the Future is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers](#) (86 FR 7475), it is the policy of the executive branch to use terms and conditions of Federal financial assistance awards to maximize, consistent with law, the use of goods, products, and materials produced in, and services offered in, the United States.

Consistent with the requirements of the Build America, Buy America Act (Pub. L. 117-58, Division G, Title IX, Subtitle A, November 15, 2021), no funding made available through this funding opportunity may be obligated for an award unless all iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in the project are produced in the United States. For additional information, visit NSF's [Build America, Buy America](#) webpage.

## C. Reporting Requirements

For all multi-year grants (including both standard and continuing grants), the Principal Investigator must submit an annual project report to the cognizant Program Officer no later than 90 days prior to the end of the current budget period. (Some programs or awards require submission of more frequent project reports). No later than 120 days following expiration of a grant, the PI also is required to submit a final project report, and a project outcomes report for the general public.

Failure to provide the required annual or final project reports, or the project outcomes report, will delay NSF review and processing of any future funding increments as well as any pending proposals for all identified PIs and co-PIs on a given award. PIs should examine the formats of the required reports in advance to assure availability of required data.

PIs are required to use NSF's electronic project-reporting system, available through Research.gov, for preparation and submission of annual and final project reports. Such reports provide information on accomplishments, project participants (individual and organizational), publications, and other specific products and impacts of the project. Submission of the report via Research.gov constitutes certification by the PI that the contents of the report are accurate and complete. The project outcomes report also must be prepared and submitted using Research.gov. This report serves as a brief summary, prepared specifically for the public, of the nature and outcomes of the project. This report will be posted on the NSF website exactly as it is submitted by the PI.

More comprehensive information on NSF Reporting Requirements and other important information on the administration of NSF awards is contained in the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* (PAPPG) Chapter VII, available electronically on the NSF Website at [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=pappg](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg).

## VIII. AGENCY CONTACTS

*Please note that the program contact information is current at the time of publishing. See program website for any updates to the points of contact.*

General inquiries regarding this program should be made to:

- Raleigh L. Martin, GEO/RISE, telephone: (703) 292-7199, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Sylvia J. Spengler, CISE/IIS, telephone: (703) 292-7347, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Marlon Pierce, CISE/OAC, telephone: (703) 292-7743, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Jodi Mead, MPS/DMS, telephone: (703) 292-7212, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Eva E. Zanzerkia, GEO/EAR, telephone: (703) 292-4734, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Joseph Carlin, GEO/OCE, telephone: (703) 292-8562, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Maria P. Womack, GEO/AGS, telephone: (703) 292-2620, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Marc Stieglitz, GEO/OPP, telephone: (703) 292-4354, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Sean C. Kennan, GEO/OCE, telephone: (703) 292-7575, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)
- Eric DeWeaver, GEO/AGS, telephone: (703) 292-8527, email: [caig@nsf.gov](mailto:caig@nsf.gov)

For questions related to the use of NSF systems contact:

- NSF Help Desk: 1-800-381-1532
- Research.gov Help Desk e-mail: [rgov@nsf.gov](mailto:rgov@nsf.gov)

For questions relating to Grants.gov contact:

- Grants.gov Contact Center: If the Authorized Organizational Representatives (AOR) has not received a confirmation message from Grants.gov within 48 hours of submission of application, please contact via telephone: 1-800-518-4726; e-mail: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).

## IX. OTHER INFORMATION

The NSF website provides the most comprehensive source of information on NSF Directorates (including contact information), programs and funding opportunities. Use of this website by potential proposers is strongly encouraged. In addition, "NSF Update" is an information-delivery system designed to keep potential proposers and other interested parties apprised of new NSF funding opportunities and publications, important changes in proposal and award policies and procedures, and upcoming NSF [Grants Conferences](#). Subscribers are informed through e-mail or the user's Web browser each time new publications are issued that match their identified interests. "NSF Update" also is available on [NSF's website](#).

Grants.gov provides an additional electronic capability to search for Federal government-wide grant opportunities. NSF funding opportunities may be accessed via this mechanism. Further information on Grants.gov may be obtained at <https://www.grants.gov>.

## ABOUT THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is an independent Federal agency created by the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended (42 USC 1861-75). The Act states the purpose of the NSF is "to promote the progress of science; [and] to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare by supporting research and education in all fields of science and engineering."

NSF funds research and education in most fields of science and engineering. It does this through grants and cooperative agreements to more than 2,000 colleges, universities, K-12 school systems, businesses, informal science organizations and other research organizations throughout the US. The Foundation accounts for about one-fourth of Federal support to academic institutions for basic research.

NSF receives approximately 55,000 proposals each year for research, education and training projects, of which approximately 11,000 are funded. In addition, the Foundation receives several thousand applications for graduate and postdoctoral fellowships. The agency operates no laboratories itself but does support National Research Centers, user facilities, certain oceanographic vessels and Arctic and Antarctic research stations. The Foundation also supports cooperative research between universities and industry, US participation in international scientific and engineering efforts, and educational activities at every academic level.

*Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASED)* provide funding for special assistance or equipment to enable persons with disabilities to work on NSF-supported projects. See the *NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide* Chapter II.F.7 for instructions regarding preparation of these types of proposals.

The National Science Foundation has Telephonic Device for the Deaf (TDD) and Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) capabilities that enable individuals with hearing impairments to communicate with the Foundation about NSF programs, employment or general information. TDD may be accessed at (703) 292-5090 and (800) 281-8749, FIRS at (800) 877-8339.

The National Science Foundation Information Center may be reached at (703) 292-5111.

The National Science Foundation promotes and advances scientific progress in the United States by competitively awarding grants and cooperative agreements for research and education in the sciences, mathematics, and engineering.

To get the latest information about program deadlines, to download copies of NSF publications, and to access abstracts of awards, visit the NSF Website at <https://www.nsf.gov>

- **Location:** 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22314
- **For General Information** (703) 292-5111  
(NSF Information Center):
- **TDD (for the hearing-impaired):** (703) 292-5090
- **To Order Publications or Forms:**  
Send an e-mail to: [nspubs@nsf.gov](mailto:nspubs@nsf.gov)  
or telephone: (703) 292-8134
- **To Locate NSF Employees:** (703) 292-5111

## PRIVACY ACT AND PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENTS

The information requested on proposal forms and project reports is solicited under the authority of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended. The information on proposal forms will be used in connection with the selection of qualified proposals; and project reports submitted by proposers will be used for program evaluation and reporting within the Executive Branch and to Congress. The information requested may be disclosed to qualified reviewers and staff assistants as part of the proposal review process; to proposer institutions/grantees to provide or obtain data regarding the proposal review process, award decisions, or the administration of awards; to government contractors, experts, volunteers and researchers and educators as necessary to complete assigned work; to other government agencies or other entities needing information regarding proposers or nominees as part of a joint application review process, or in order to coordinate programs or policy; and to another Federal agency, court, or party in a court or Federal administrative proceeding if the government is a party. Information about Principal Investigators may be added to the Reviewer file and used to select potential candidates to serve as peer reviewers or advisory committee members. See [System of Record Notices, NSF-50](#), "Principal Investigator/Proposal File and Associated Records," and [NSF-51](#), "Reviewer/Proposal File and Associated Records." Submission of the information is voluntary. Failure to provide full and complete information, however, may reduce the possibility of receiving an award.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, an information collection unless it displays a valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. The OMB control number for this collection is 3145-0058. Public reporting burden for this

collection of information is estimated to average 120 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions. Send comments regarding the burden estimate and any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to:

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