RURAL SYSTEMIC INITIATIVES IN SCIENCE, MATHEMATICS AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

Program Solicitation, Information, and Guidelines

DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES
NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: MARCH 15 (postmarked)

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

National Science Foundation
Directorate for Education and Human Resources

INQUIRIES

Questions not addressed in this publication may be directed to: Directorate for Education and Human Resources, National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA 22230, (703) 306-1234; or via E–mail to Internet. Internet users should send requests to ESRrsi@nsf.gov.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) provides awards for research in the sciences and engineering. The awardee is wholly responsible for the conduct of such research and preparation of the results for publication. The Foundation, therefore, does not assume responsibility for the research findings or their interpretation.

The Foundation welcomes proposals from all qualified scientists and engineers and strongly encourages women, minorities, and persons with disabilities to compete fully in any of the research related programs described here. In accordance with federal statutes, regulations, and NSF policies, no person on grounds of race, color, age, sex, national origin, or disability shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving financial assistance from the National Science Foundation.

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Privacy Act and Public Burden. The information requested on proposal forms is solicited under the authority of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended. It will be used in connection with the selection of qualified proposals and may be disclosed to qualified reviewers and staff assistants as part of the review process; to applicant institutions/grantees; to provide or obtain data regarding the application review process, award decisions, or the administration of awards; to government contractors, experts, volunteers, and researchers as necessary to complete assigned work; and to other government agencies in order to coordinate programs. See Systems of Records, NSF 50, Principal Investigators/Proposal File and Associated Records, and NSF-51, 60 Federal Register 4449 (January 23, 1995). Reviewer/Proposal File and Associated Records, 59 Federal Register 8031 (February 17, 1994). Submission of the information is voluntary. Failure to provide full and complete information, however, may reduce the possibility of your receiving an award.

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The National Science Foundation has TDD (Telephonic Device for the Deaf) capability, which enables individuals with hearing impairment to communicate with the Foundation about NSF programs, employment, or general information. To access NSF TDD dial (703) 306-0090; for FIRS, 1-800-877-8339.

Directorate for Education And Human Resources Rural Systemic Initiatives

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

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INTRODUCTION

The role of science and technology in American society is undergoing dramatic change. In an increasingly technology-oriented society, a basic understanding of science and mathematics is essential to maintain a population prepared to meet the need for a technically competent work force. Emerging jobs require higher skill levels in science, mathematics, engineering and technology (SMET) than ever before and more effective education and human resources initiatives are needed if America is to maintain its technological leadership in the world marketplace. NSF is committed to providing strong and continuing leadership and support for the nation's efforts to improve SMET education, as well as general scientific and mathematical literacy.

The Directorate for Education and Human Resources (EHR), has primary responsibility for NSF's educational activities. The programs supported by EHR span preschool through professional levels. Programs include student-centered activities, curriculum and instructional materials development, informal science education, teacher and faculty enhancement, and comprehensive systemic improvement efforts at the precollege and undergraduate levels. Activities range from programs to improve public science literacy to those designed to enhance the diversity and the preparation of the Nation's scientists, mathematicians, and engineers.

Systemic reform of education is increasingly recognized as the necessary strategy to provide sustainable improvements in the nation's educational enterprise. *Systemic* refers to fundamental, comprehensive and coordinated changes made in science, mathematics and technology education through attendant changes in policy, financing, governance, management, content and conduct. *Systemic reform* occurs when all essential features of schools and school systems are engaged and operating in concert; when policy is aligned with a clear set of goals and standards; when the forthcoming improvements and innovations become an intrinsic part of the ongoing educational system for all children; and when the changes become part of the school system's operating budget.

NSF considers successful systemic reform to result in:

- Implementation of a comprehensive, standards-based curriculum and/or instructional materials that are aligned with instruction and assessment available to every student served by the system and its partners.
- Development of a coherent, consistent set of policies that supports provision of: high-quality mathematics and science education for each student; excellent preparation, continuing education, and support for mathematics and science teachers (especially at the elementary level); and support for administrators who have responsibility for implementing science and mathematics education reform.
- Convergence of all resources that are designed for or that reasonably could be used to support science and mathematics education—fiscal, intellectual, material—both in formal and informal education settings—into a focused program that upgrades and continually improves the educational program in mathematics and science for all students.
- Broad-based support from parents, policy makers, institutions of higher education, business and industry, foundations, and other segments of the community for the goals and collective value of the program that is based on an understanding of the ideas behind the program and knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Accumulation of a broad and deep array of evidence that the program is significantly enhancing student achievement and participation in science and mathematics through a set of indices that might include achievement in standard and performance-based tests, portfolio assessments, course enrollments, college admission rates, college majors in SMET, higher level courses passed, advanced-placement tests taken, and perceptions of local employers.
- Significant reductions in the achievement disparities among students that can be attributed to socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, or learning styles.

THE DIVISION OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM REFORM

Within EHR, the Division of Educational System Reform (ESR) serves as a focal point for the Directorate's involvement in systemic reform efforts managing large-scale programs for states, large urban centers, and rural areas to strengthen science and technology education infrastructure. The programmatic activities of ESR have focused on stimulating states and selected major cities to initiate comprehensive efforts for making lasting improvements in their science, mathematics, and technology education. In FY 1993, ESR began developing an initiative for rural regions.

This solicitation calls for development and implementation awards under the Foundation's systemic educational reform effort, the Rural Systemic Initiatives (RSI) in Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education. The RSI Program began in FY 1994, making planning and development awards to representative institutions on behalf of coalitions of educational stakeholders in six rural, impoverished regions. In 1995, the program made four implementation awards to six of these sites. Information about these awards is available by contacting ESR, and on the World Wide Web at http://red.www.nsf.gov.

THE RURAL SYSTEMIC INITIATIVES

National tests in science and mathematics achievement indicate a performance gap across regions of the nation. This gap has been attributed to a variety of factors, but is strongly linked with the level of economic poverty of students and

the regions in which they reside. Course-taking patterns are strong predictors of the likelihood that students will enroll and succeed in advanced science and mathematics courses or in programs that lead to scientific or technical degrees. Therefore, the lack of students' access to appropriate science and mathematics courses in school severely limits their educational career choices and their ability to be competitive in the increasingly technical workplace. Data show that students in extreme rural or disadvantaged urban areas receive the least exposure to science and mathematics courses.

Schools are increasingly challenged to provide up-to-date, relevant science and mathematics instruction. Rural schools in areas of high poverty have often been isolated from the mainstream of systemic reform efforts that many states have undertaken. Declining tax bases in economically disadvantaged regions have disproportionately increased the barriers faced by rural and inner city schools to ensure curricular improvements in these vital subjects.

The Rural[1] Systemic Initiatives (RSI) Program addresses the barriers to adequate science, mathematics and technology education in economically disadvantaged regions of the nation. By stimulating systemic reform efforts among the communities, school districts, and classrooms of rural areas, RSI encourages the development of strategies that will result in sustainable, adaptable, and systemic improvements in science, mathematics, and technology education in schools and colleges. While the primary focus of the program is on providing leadership and support for educational reform in a rural region, RSI also hopes to encourage discussions geared toward economic growth for the region that bear on student access to, and achievement in, these subjects. RSI's strategy for accomplishing this is to bring together the education, economic, and community leaders as partners, to allow the development of a comprehensive plan for community development, by the impetus of systemic science, mathematics and technology educational reform.

RSI GOALS

The goals of the RSI program are:

1. the improvement of science, mathematics and technology education in rural, economically disadvantaged regions of the nation, including, but not limited to, access to high quality, standards-based instruction, innovative use of educational technologies for interactive delivery of instruction, and the training of the teaching workforce to meet the demands of a new instructional paradigm;
2. the preparation of a technologically competent workforce that supports economic development within a community or region, by strengthening the science, mathematics and technology instructional capacities in schools, and in two-year and four-year institutions of higher education, particularly as it related to technician education, lower division instruction of technical curricula, and science and mathematics instruction of the future teaching workforce;
3. the enhancement of scientific literacy and appreciation among students and the general community in rural, economically disadvantaged regions of the nation; and
4. the development of community infrastructure to provide resources to sustain educational improvements, including education policy and economic development, governmental commitment, resource reallocation, and community support and involvement in rural schools and districts.

Successful RSI proposals will develop:

- a **sound plan** for science, mathematics and technology learning that includes: high-quality, standards-based curriculum; instruction that engages all students; development of a talented and creative teacher work force; assessment plans that serve children and instruction; articulation strategies, particularly those that encourage the transition from high school to lower division college instruction; provision of appropriate materials and equipment; explicit public accountability strategies and reporting mechanisms; and a nurturing environment.
- a **system** that allows all students equitable access to factors which are an integral part of the proposed vision. This includes appropriate changes in district/school policies, structure, and decision–making, as well as the need to provide for a secure environment with includes access to health and social services, despite the fact that funds and expertise for these areas must be sought from sources other than NSF.
- **collaboration** that extends across school systems and between school systems and institutions of higher education, particularly community colleges, resulting in the meaningful alignment of funding, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and teacher preparation and enhancement in science, mathematics and technology instruction.
- **partnerships** among the schools and such attendant groups as: parents; community organizations; teachers' unions; institutions of higher education, particularly community colleges; museums and other informal science centers; local and state governments; federal agencies; private foundations; business and industry; professional associations; and the media. The focus should be on partnerships that help create, support, and redesign the system.
- **linkages** with all significant or major mathematics and science technology programs in the region, particularly NSF's Statewide Systemic Initiatives (SSI), Comprehensive Regional Centers for Minorities (CRCM), Local

[1] For the purposes of this program, NSF includes as "rural" those counties classified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (ERS) as completely rural, as well as those classified as urban of population less than 20,000.

Systemic Change Through Teacher Enhancement (LSC), and the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR).

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Regions. The Rural Systemic Initiative is designed to fund sustainable reform in the science, mathematics and technology education of students in rural, economically disadvantaged regions. Therefore, eligible regions are those comprised of counties which are designated as categories 6-9 according to the County Types Code[2] Classification, and in which 30% or greater of the school-age children are living in poverty, as designated by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. In exceptional circumstances, proposals will be accepted from regions that include non-eligible counties. Proposers must strongly document their justifications for consideration of exception, and **must confer with an appropriate ESR program officer prior to submission**.

Eligible rural regions may encompass connected school districts located in different states, or school districts that are non-contiguous but are meaningfully linked by common educational goals and community issues (e.g., tribal schools or migrant education networks). RSI regions are typically vast and include many school districts.

Eligible Organizations. Many components of a community are necessary to provide leadership, direction, support and sustainability to systemic reform of education. NSF believes that partnerships involving representatives of these components provide the most viable mechanism for ensuring the accomplishment of this reform. RSI will accept proposals from non-profit organizations on behalf of consortia of school districts and communities representing the educational interests of their students in eligible regions. Proposing consortia should include representatives from state and local education agencies, schools, community colleges, business and industry, health and human services agencies, and economic development agencies; and may include private foundations and four-year colleges and universities. RSI will not accept proposals from state departments of education, state-level agencies, or federally funded research and development organizations.

Eligible Activities.

1. **Development Awards**—The complexity of systemic educational reform generally requires discussion and planning, and consensus-building is essential for successful implementation of a reform agenda. Development awards will be made to established coalitions that have articulated visions and goals for educational improvement. They will typically support a self-study of the region, the development of base-line data, an in-depth study of proposed activities and their feasibility in this context, articulation of implementation strategies, and determination of financial commitment of the relevant partners. Support under RSI is available for, but not limited to: staff release time, consultants' fees, travel, computer network time, and related office costs. The size of a given award will be dependent on the nature and scope of the project but will typically range from $100,000 to $200,000. Development awards will typically be of 12 months' duration. It is anticipated that there will be no more than 8 such awards in FY 1997; the number in FY 1998 will be contingent upon available funding.

2. **Implementation Awards**—While the establishment of regional coalitions is a key component, the primary goal of RSI is the successful and sustainable improvement of science, mathematics, and technology education at the kindergarten through lower division undergraduate (K-14) level in rural, economically disadvantaged, geographically challenged and sparsely populated areas. Proposers must have demonstrated readiness to achieve systemic educational reform through comprehensive planning that has: (1) produced a regional vision for science, mathematics and technology education; (2) resulted in commitment to policy, fiscal, and instructional practice reforms on the part of the participating districts; (3) identified strengths and weaknesses in current programs; (4) secured local, state, and national resources, both public and private, to promote necessary changes; and (5) focused on needed state and local policy changes to expedite reform.

Support under RSI is available for but not limited to: identification, adaptation, and implementation of standards-based science and mathematics curriculum; purchase or adaptation of instructional materials in concert with appropriate teacher enhancement activities; teacher in-service and pre-service enhancement activities specifically targeted to the needs of rural teachers and which support the goals of RSI; electronic and telecommunication training and support (within a specified, limited timeframe); leadership activities for teachers and school administrators; development and delivery of workshops that are specifically tailored to the goals of RSI, e.g., increasing parental and community involvement in science and mathematics education; regional meetings of the consortia and potential partners; project staff salaries; travel; clerical services; consultants; and technical assistance. Funds should be included for the principal investigator(s) (PI) and project directors (PD) (no more than 3 people) to attend semi-annual three-day meetings and semi-annual two-day technical assistance meetings, and a one-day annual performance review in Washington, DC. RSI will not support curriculum or instructional materials

[2] The ERS County Types Code, developed by the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture represents an urban-to-rural continuum in which 0 represents the nation's most urban counties and 9, the most rural counties. In developing the continuum, ERS considered county characteristics such as land use, population, percentage of residents who commute to jobs in urban areas, and other similar factors. County Type Codes are available on the World Wide Web: http://www.usda.gov.

development; purchase of instructional materials to supplant school resources; purchase of general purpose office equipment; purchase of permanent scientific equipment or instrumentation; or purchase of telecommunications or computer equipment, except as deemed essential by the program officer for effective management and deployment of the activities.

RSI requires cost-sharing for all implementation awards submitted in response to this solicitation. The proposed cost-sharing will be considered in evaluating the proposal and will be a condition of an award. The amount of cost-sharing should be shown in sufficient detail to allow NSF to determine its impact on the proposed project. Documentation of availability of cost-sharing must be included in the proposal.

Only items which would be allowable under the applicable cost principles, if charged to the project, may be included as the grantee's contribution to cost sharing. Contributions may be made from any non-federal sources, including non-federal grants or contracts. Contributions from non-federal sources may be counted as cost sharing toward federal projects only once. Additional funds made available through federal sources (e.g., Eisenhower Program, Title I, Title II, GOALS 2000, etc.) should be specifically identified. The use of facilities, equipment and materials during normal hours of operation is not considered cost sharing.

NSF expects to receive proposals for Implementation Awards beginning in FY 1998. Implementation proposals will be accepted only from consortia that have received Development Awards. Implementation awards are expected to be funded at a level of $1-$2 million per year for up to 5 years; funding for each year subsequent to Year 1 will be contingent upon achievement of a series of benchmarks mutually agreed upon by the proposers and the Foundation, and specified in a cooperative agreement. It is anticipated that there will be 3-5 implementation awards in FY 1998, contigent upon availability of funds.

GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

Preparation and Submission of Proposals

Except as modified by this solicitation, proposals submitted to NSF must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the guidelines provided in this program solicitation and the general NSF guidelines provided in the current edition of Grant Proposal Guide (GPG), NSF 95-27. Single copies of this brochure are available at no cost from the Forms and Publications Unit, phone (703) 306-1130, via e–mail (Internet:pubs@nsf.gov), or on the World Wide Web: http://www.nsf.gov.

All proposals described in this document must contain the following sections which are described fully in GPG:

- **Supplementary Information about Principal Investigators** (NSF Form 1225)
- **Proposal Cover Sheet** (NSF Form 1207, revised 7/95)
- **Table of Contents** with page numbers indicated
- **Project Summary**
- **Detailed Budget** (NSF Form 1030)
- **Budget Justification**
- **Project Description** (See individual programs for a more detailed explanation.)
- **Bibliography**
- **Biographical Sketches**
- **Current and Pending Support** (NSF Form 1239)
- **Results from Prior NSF Support**
- **Appendices**

In addition to the standard sections listed above, some proposals are required to contain the following:

- **Special Certifications** concerning lobbying, human subjects, animal care and use, etc. (see GPG)

Project Description may not exceed fifteen (15) single-spaced pages. The proposal must be of letter quality with a typeface or font giving no more than 12 characters per inch. Each copy of the proposal should be on standard size paper and stapled only in the upper left corner. All pages must be numbered. All material submitted to the Foundation must be contained in a single package. Secure packaging is essential. The Foundation is not responsible for the processing of proposals damaged in transit.

The Program acronym (RSI) must be clearly listed on the mailing label and on the cover sheet. *Proposers are strongly encouraged to contact the relevant program officer prior to submission of the proposal.*

Fifteen (15) copies of each proposal, including one copy bearing original signatures, should be mailed to:

Proposal Processing Unit
Attention: EHR/RSI
National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22230

One additional copy should be sent to the attention of the Program Director, RSI Program, at the address given below. This need not be a signed copy. It should not be bound or stapled because it will be photocopied.

Division of Educational System Reform
Rural Systemic Initiatives Program
National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Blvd., Rm. 875
Arlington, VA 22230
(703)-306-1690; FAX (703)-306-0456

Only one (1) copy of NSF Form 1225, attached to the original signed proposal, should be sent.

PROPOSAL REVIEW

Proposals in response to this solicitation will be accepted and reviewed in the Division of Educational System Reform. Proposals will be reviewed in accordance with established Foundation procedures and the four general criteria described in GPG. The four general criteria that NSF uses to evaluate all proposals are:

- **Performance competence**. Capability of the investigator(s), the technical soundness of the proposed approach, and the adequacy of institutional resources available or proposed.
- **Intrinsic merit**. Likelihood that the project will lead to new discoveries or fundamental advances within its field or have substantial impact on progress within the field or in other scientific and engineering fields.
- **Utility or relevance of the project**. Likelihood that the project can contribute to the achievement of a goal that is extrinsic or in addition to that of the field itself, and thereby serve as the basis for new or improved technology or assist in the solution of societal problems.
- **Effect on the infrastructure of science or engineering**. Potential of the proposed project to contribute to better understanding or improvement of the quality, distribution, or effectiveness of the Nation's scientific and engineering research, education, and personnel base and the adequacy of the evaluation plan for insuring this potential.

ADDITIONAL REVIEW CRITERIA

In addition to the general NSF review criteria previously listed, reviewers of RSI proposals will be asked to consider the extent to which the following have been addressed.

Development and Implementation Awards

a. demonstration of a consortium framework and program-driven goals for science and mathematics education improvement.

b. shared leadership among consortium partners

c. potential impact on the target population

Implementation Awards

a. demonstration that the proposal is built on self-assessment

b. roles and levels of commitment of each stakeholder/segment involved in process

c. evidence that the following have been considered:

   1. community knowledge base and views
   2. community development
   3. curriculum frameworks applicable to state and/or local levels
   4. pre- and inservice professional development
   5. alignment with regional, state, national education goals.

d. extent to which the proposers identify, address, and plan to modify potential or actual impediments to systemic reform, including:

   1. structure and governance of local educational agencies
   2. administrative practices
   3. parental/community involvement
   4. intra- and intercommunications

e. fiscal responsibility aimed at local levels,

f. evaluation that includes methods of assessing improvements in instruction and performance, and

g. plan for sustaining improvements beyond award duration.

Proposals will be reviewed, as appropriate, by experts selected from the science, mathematics, engineering and technology research and education communities. The review process may include site visits by NSF staff and/or selected reviewers, or other methods of gathering additional information deemed desirable for award determination. Special efforts will be made to secure reviews from individuals with strong records of achievement in the educational or scientific disciplines impacted by the proposal. Final award determination will be made by program staff and will reflect both reviewer comments and program priorities.

Review and processing of proposals require approximately six months.

AWARD ADMINISTRATION

Development Awards made as a result of this competition will be made as grants; Implementation Awards will be made as cooperative agreements. Awards made as a result of this document will be administered in accordance with the terms and conditions of NSF GC–1, "Grant General Conditions," and NSF CA–1" Cooperative Agreement General Terms and Conditions," respectively. Copies of these documents are available at no cost from the NSF Forms and Publications Unit, phone (703) 306-1130, or via e–mail (Internet:pubs@nsf.gov). More comprehensive information is contained in the NSF Grant Policy Manual (NSF 95-26), for sale through the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402, or electronically on the World Wide Web through the NSF Homepage (http://www.nsf.gov) under "Info and Pubs." The telephone number at GPO is (202) 783–3238 for subscription information.

Appendix A

OTHER NSF PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

Program Announcements may be obtained electronically through STIS (see inside front cover), or requested from NSF Forms and Publications Unit, by telephone (703/306-1130), or via e-mail (Internet:pubs@nsf.gov).

Division of Elementary, Secondary, and Informal Science Education

Elementary, Secondary, and Informal Education: Program Announcement and Guidelines (NSF 95-150)
- Informal Science Education
- Teacher Enhancement
- Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching

Local Systemic Change Through Teacher Enhancement in Mathematics, Grades 7-12 (NSF 95-145)
Instructional Materials Development (NSF 96-61)
Parent Involvement in Science, Mathematics and Technology Education (NSF 96-107)
Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics Teaching (Flyer)

Division of Undergraduate Education

Undergraduate Education Program Announcement and Guidelines (NSF 96-10)
- Instrumentation and Laboratory Improvement
- Course and Curriculum Development
- Institution-Wide Reform of Undergraduate Education in Science, Mathematics, Engineering and Technology
- Undergraduate Faculty Enhancement Program
- Advanced Technological Education
- Collaboratives for Excellence in Teacher Preparation

Institution-wide Reform of Undergraduate Education (NSF 96-74)
Research Experiences for Undergraduates (NSF 96-102)
Research in Undergraduate Institutions (NSF 94-79)
Collaborative Research at Undergraduate Institutions (NSF 94-90)

Division of Research, Evaluation and Commumication

Research on Education, Policy and Practice (NSF 96-138)

Office of Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR)

Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (NSF 95-141)

Division of Human Resource Development

Human Resource Development for Minorities in Science and Engineering (NSF 96-144)
- Comprehensive Partnerships for Mathematics and Science Achievement (Elementary and Secondary)
- Alliances for Minority Participation (Undergraduate)
- Centers of Research Excellence in Science and Technology (Institutional)

Facilitation Awards for Scientists ad Engineers with Disabilities (NSF 92-54)
EHR Activities for Persons with Disabilities (NSF 96-88)
EHR Activities for Women and Girls in Science, Engineering and Mathematics (NSF 96-131)

General Information

NSF Guide to Programs, FY 1996 (NSF 95-138)
NSF Publications Catalog - 1996 (NSF 96-47)
Grant Proposal Guide (NSF 95-27)
Proposal Forms Kit (NSF 95-28)

PROPOSAL BUDGET FORM PRIVACY ACT AND PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENT

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