**5/9/22 Virtual Office Hours Recap – CAREER Proposals**

The Division of Environmental Biology (DEB) held its latest Virtual Office Hour on May 9, 2022. Program Officers provided an overview of the Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) program. We host these office hours 1-2pm EST on the 2nd Monday of every month. There is a designated theme each time, but attendees are welcome to ask about other NSF-related topics. Program Officers from each of DEB’s clusters are present at each Virtual Office Hour, so a wide range of scientific perspectives are represented.

The presentation and other documents are available here:

[Slides (PDF)](https://www.nsf.gov/bio/deb/DEB%20Office%20Hours%20May%20CAREER%202022.pdf)

[PAPPG 22-1](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf22001)

[DEB NSF webpage](https://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=DEB)

[Faculty Early Career Development Program (CAREER) – (NSF 22-586)](https://beta.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/faculty-early-career-development-program-career)

If you were unable to attend, here are some of the questions asked during the Q & A section:

**Q: What are the eligibility criteria for the CAREER solicitation?**

A: Proposers must meet all the following eligibility requirements as of the deadline (July 27, 2022):

* Hold a doctoral degree in a field supported by NSF.
* Be engaged in research in an area of science, engineering, or education supported by NSF.
* Hold at least a 50% tenure-track (or tenure-track-equivalent) position as an assistant professor (or equivalent title).
* Be untenured.
* Have not previously received a CAREER award.

See the new CAREER solicitation for more information ([NSF 22-586](https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2022/nsf22586/nsf22586.pdf)).

**Q: Does the $500k minimum budget for CAREER proposals submitted to the BIO directorate include overhead costs?**

A: Yes. It does include overhead costs.

**Q: Do we need to have broader impact activities in addition to the education and research activities outlined in the proposal?**

A: Yes. As with all proposals submitted to the National Science Foundation, you should describe both Intellectual Merits and Broader Impacts that will result from your project. Additionally, because of the special CAREER requirements, there should be a detailed education plan. Portions of the activities included in the education plan could be included in your Broader Impacts, especially any outreach activities or recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups in STEM. However, there will not be complete overlap between Broader Impacts and the education plan. For further guidance on developing a strong Broader Impacts strategy, please consult the resources available at [Advancing Research Impact in Society](https://researchinsociety.org/) (ARIS).

**To hyperlink-**[**https://researchinsociety.org**](https://researchinsociety.org)

**Q: Could the conservation impact of a project be considered a "Broader Impact" as a benefit to society?**

A: Yes. Conservation impact is a benefit to society and therefore could be considered a broader impact. As with all proposed broader impact activities, a specific description of the conservation activity and how it fulfills broader impact goals would help reviewers evaluate its potential effectiveness.

**Q: Is it okay to propose a substantial change to an existing course, or should all courses in a CAREER be brand new?**

A: It is reasonable to propose changes to an existing course in your education plan. Make sure to describe and justify your motivations for those changes, and what you anticipate the impact of those changes will be in terms of enrollment and student learning outcomes or skills.

**Q: Which of the following would be the kind of support NSF desires in the Departmental Letter? physical infrastructure for teaching and research activities, local expertise and mentoring, cultural support for or alignment of the project with departmental/institutional goals?**

A: Any/all these elements can be included in the Departmental Letter. Because CAREER projects require tight integration of teaching and research activities, the support of the department and departmental collaboration with the PI is requisite for successful implementation of the project as proposed. Refer to the solicitation for what should be included (and not included!) in this letter.

**Q: Does the educational component need to be undergrad-focused, or should it focus on the graduate level or postdoc training?**

A: Education plans should match your institutional context. There is no requirement that specifies the targets for training, education, or outreach. You can include undergraduate and graduate students, K-12 students, and postdoc training. Postdoc training will require submission of a postdoctoral mentoring plan and any postdoctoral salary support should be included in the personnel section of the budget. The education plan should be effective and integrative part of your research.

**Q: Is it ok to include support for a postdoc or students? Should student support be included in participant support costs or as salary under personnel?**

A: Yes, you can request support for a postdoc, undergraduate students, and/or graduate students as part of a CAREER proposal. Postdoc support should be included under personnel salary in the budget. As part of participant support costs, you can include Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) students, and other students whose participation is largely for their benefit and training. Expenses under participant support in the budget might include stipends, travel, subsistence, and other costs associated with the REU experience. If you have an undergraduate student who is not doing an independent research project but serving in research technician role, those costs are more appropriately placed as a wage in the personnel section. There are no limits to project personnel you can request for a CAREER proposal, other than the limit imposed by a reasonable total budget. There should be tight alignment between the work that needs to get done to achieve the project aims, the personnel and their roles in that work, and the budgetary costs of supporting those personnel.

**Q: Are 'citizen-science' projects preferred over traditional research projects?**

A: There is no preference for any one kind of education activity or broader impact over another. The educational plan and/or broader impacts should be well-planned, clearly described, and there should be a rationale for why those activities were chosen and how they relate to the research, institutional context, and interests/abilities of the PI.

**Q: Is there any database of previously awarded CAREER proposals that can be consulted to learn about the general structures used in successful proposals?**

A: Full text of complete proposals are confidential. However, the abstracts and some basic award details on individual CAREER awards (including total budgets) can be found on the [NSF website](https://nsf.gov/awardsearch/) under award search.

**Q: I'm at a research non-profit and considered "tenure track equivalent." Is it required to make that designation/explanation in the letter of support or somewhere else in the proposal?**

A: The solicitation requires the Departmental Letter to assert you are in fact eligible for consideration. Your institution should indicate you have a continuing appointment, and the appointment has substantial research and educational responsibility, and the project relates to your career goals and job responsibilities. The letter must clearly demonstrate how your appointment satisfies the mentioned requirements for tenure track equivalency.

**Q: Can sub-awardee collaborators be international?**

A: NSF encourages CAREER Principal Investigators to include international/global dimensions in their projects. As appropriate, the CAREER proposal should delineate how its activities fit within the context of expertise, facilities, data, and other resources that are being applied globally in relevant areas of research and education, and how the CAREER award would position the Principal Investigator and his/her organization to take a leadership role. If applicable, the proposal should clearly state how the research and education activities will be enhanced by international engagements and should describe the benefits to participants in the U.S. and abroad. Proposers are encouraged to contact the relevant country Program Officer in the Office of International Science and Engineering (OISE) listed in <https://www.nsf.gov/od/iia/ise/country-list.jsp>.

**Q: Is there a place to view public data on NSF funding by demography, geography, directorate, etc.?**

A: Yes, there is! Check out NSF by the Numbers ([NSF by the Numbers | Beta site for NSF - National Science Foundation](https://beta.nsf.gov/about/about-nsf-by-the-numbers)). There are several data dashboards and reports that can provide information about historic and current funding.

**Q: Can you request support for teaching-related activities (e.g., support for a teaching assistant)?**

A: Budget items that support the educational plan or broader impacts are certainly appropriate. Specific costs are weighed against formal NSF policies set out in the PAPPG for allowability of costs, and against the necessity of that cost to perform the project as proposed.

**Q: Should faculty at HBCU and MSI intuitions focus more on the education goals than the research goals?**

A: NSF does not prescribe specific approaches or proportional effort on intellectual merit and broader impacts. The PI should develop a plan that advances both sets of goals and is tenable given their institutional context. Each institution provides its own challenges and opportunities, and a well-devised proposal will attend to both.

**Q: Would links between a CAREER proposal and existing outreach projects be looked upon favorably?**

A: Working with established programs, whether within your institution or outside of it, can provide benefits like expertise, sustainability, and connections to audiences for outreach. But if your plan depends on that other organization to succeed, a clear agreement to collaborate is wise to include in your proposal, most likely as a letter of collaboration (see PAPPG for required language and formatting).

**Q: Is summer salary allowable to support the activities?**

A: Summer salary is allowable. PIs are restricted to no more than two months of summer salary per year from all NSF awards combined, except under special circumstances.

**Q: Can unfunded grants be re-submitted with revision? Is there a different deadline for resubmission?**

A: A proposal that is declined for funding can be resubmitted, if: 1) the specific program allows it, 2) the PI is still eligible, and 3) the proposal has been substantially revised (usually considering the reviewers’ comments and progress by the PI).

We also encourage you to check out last year's CAREER virtual office hour recap [here](https://debblog.nsfbio.com/2021/05/13/5-10-2021-virtual-office-hours-recap-career-proposals/) where we answered more questions. Additionally, NSF is hosting more CAREER Program [webinars](https://nsf.gov/events/event_summ.jsp?cntn_id=304904&org=NSF) this month.

Please reach out to a Program Officer if you have any questions about the proposal submission and review process in [DEB](https://www.nsf.gov/staff/staff_list.jsp?org=DEB&from_org=DEB) programs. NSF has suggested [5 tips on working with Program Officers](https://beta.nsf.gov/science-matters/nsf-101-5-tips-how-work-nsf-program-officer) as part of the NSF 101 series on our Science Matters blog.

Check out the upcoming office hour topics below and be sure to check back here or on the [NSF Events Page](https://www.nsf.gov/events/) for information on how to register. Our next virtual office hours will be held June 13, 2022, from 1-2pm Eastern Time and the topic will be: You've Been Awarded an NSF Grant, Now What?

**Upcoming Office Hours and Topics:**

June 13: You’ve Been Awarded an NSF Grant, Now What?

July: No Virtual Office Hour

August 8: International Collaboration

September 12: Postdoc Research Fellowship

October 17\*: How to Write a Great Proposal

November 14: Opportunities for Research in Climate Change

December 12: Upcoming Solicitations

\*date change due to Federal Holiday