



**National Science Foundation**  
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NSF 11-052

## **Dear Colleague Letter: Research Experiences for Teachers (RET) Supplement Opportunity**

Directorate for Geosciences  
Office of the Assistant Director

April 7, 2011

SUBJECT: Research Experiences for Teachers (RET) Supplement Opportunity for GEO Principal Investigators on New or Renewal Research Proposals or On-going Research Projects

This letter calls your attention to an activity that supports the participation of **K-12 educators and community college science faculty** in research projects funded by the Directorate for Geosciences (GEO) at the National Science Foundation (NSF). The Research Experiences for Teachers (RET) activity is designed to enhance the professional development of science educators through participation in new or on-going NSF-funded research projects. GEO strongly encourages its grantees to make special efforts to identify talented teachers for participation in this opportunity.

RET Supplements may be requested in one of two ways: (1) Investigators with an existing NSF research award may submit a request for supplemental funding; or (2) Proposers may include support for RET activities as part of a new (or renewal) research proposal to NSF. For further guidance and inquiries, including due dates, contact the cognizant program officer for the GEO program that is either currently funding the research, or will consider the new (or renewal) research proposal. The duration of the RET activity will generally be one year and the project may be carried out during summer months, during the academic year, or both.

Encouraging active participation of teachers in NSF projects is an excellent way to strengthen the science expertise of our nation's educators. RET Supplements should also lead to collaborative relationships between K-12 and community college science educators and the NSF research community. GEO is particularly interested in encouraging its researchers to build mutually rewarding partnerships with teachers from schools with either limited resources or that serve students who are members of groups underrepresented or under-served in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

The RET Supplement request should clearly articulate, in some detail, the form and nature of the prospective teacher's involvement in the Principal Investigator's on-going or proposed research. The teacher should be involved in a significant research experience and should have the opportunity to be involved in several aspects of the scientific process, such as designing new experiments, collecting and analyzing data, conducting a modeling study, synthesizing information or presenting results of the research. Since it is expected that the RET experience will lead to the transfer of new knowledge into classroom activities, the RET Supplement request should indicate what sustained follow-up will be provided to help in translating the teacher research experience into classroom practice. The request should clearly articulate the process that will be used to identify the teacher. The same requirements would apply for supplements to support involvement of Community College science faculty in research.

A proposal to supplement an existing NSF award with an RET Supplement should be submitted via FastLane. The description of the proposed RET Supplement activity is limited to 3 pages. A separate Biographical Sketch must be included for each teacher and submitted in the Supplementary Documents section of the supplement request. The Supplement request should also include a budget and budget justification for the funds requested. RET budgets typically include a stipend for the teacher, a travel allowance for the teacher, and up to \$1,500 for the cost of materials, equipment, software and other supplies that will be used by the teacher to develop classroom instructional materials. Additional funds

up to 25% of the total Participant Support Costs listed on line F may be requested for activities in other cost categories (e.g., salaries, wages and fringe benefits, travel, materials and supplies, and applicable indirect costs) that contribute to the effectiveness of the RET program; any such costs must be listed under the appropriate NSF budget categories and must be explained in the Budget Justification. Organizations should propose in accordance with their current disclosed accounting practices. The total cost of the Supplement is generally limited to \$12,500 per teacher.

New (or renewal) research proposals that include RET Supplements should include all of the information listed in the preceding paragraph, in addition to the information provided as part of the research proposal.

Normally, funds may be available to support up to two teachers, but exceptions to this guideline will be considered. Participation of teachers who are members of groups underrepresented in STEM fields is strongly encouraged.

RET Supplemental funding requests will be reviewed internally within NSF. Decisions to recommend a supplement request for funding will be made by the cognizant program officer for the program that administers the research award that would be supplemented. Program officers will base their decisions on the merits of the supplement request, the composition of the program's overall funding portfolio, and the availability of funds.

The National Lab Network Web site (<http://www.nationallabnetwork.org>) provides a clearinghouse for teachers who are interested in working with scientists and engineers. NSF encourages GEO-funded PIs to contact K-12 educators and community college faculty in local school districts and regions and make them aware of this RET Supplement opportunity, as well as other NSF research and educational projects. We trust that the time and effort expended will strengthen the teaching of science, mathematics, and engineering and enhance the development of the U.S. science and engineering workforce.

Sincerely,

Timothy L. Killeen  
Assistant Director