



**NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION**  
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE  
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

**NSF 20-051**

## Dear Colleague Letter: Announcing Creation of the Foundational Research in Robotics (Robotics) Program

---

March 3, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

The National Science Foundation announces the creation of the Foundational Research in Robotics (Robotics) program as a program jointly managed by the Directorates for Engineering (ENG) and Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE).

The Robotics program supports research on robotic systems that exhibit significant levels of both computational capability and physical complexity. For the purposes of this program, a robot is defined as intelligence embodied in an engineered construct, with the ability to process information, sense, and move within or substantially alter its working environment. Here intelligence includes a broad class of methods that enable a robot to solve problems or make contextually appropriate decisions. Research proposals are welcomed that consider inextricably interwoven questions of intelligence, computation, and embodiment. Projects may also focus on a distinct aspect of intelligence, computation, and/or embodiment, as long as the proposed research is clearly justified in the context of a class of robots.

The goal of the Robotics program is to erase artificial disciplinary boundaries and provide a single home for foundational research in robotics. Robotics is a deeply interdisciplinary field, and proposals are encouraged across the full range of fundamental engineering and computer science research challenges arising in robotics. All proposals should convincingly explain how a successful outcome will enable transformative new robot functionality or substantially enhance existing robot functionality.

The Robotics program will be managed by a team of Program Officers from the participating divisions, namely Civil, Mechanical and Manufacturing Innovation (CMMI), Computer and Network Systems (CNS), Computing and Communication Foundations (CCF), Electrical, Communications and Cyber Systems (ECCS) and Information and Intelligent Systems (IIS). While proposal submission via FastLane, Research.gov or Grants.gov requires selecting one of these Units of Consideration (i.e., Divisions), that choice will not affect the review process.

All submitted proposals will be considered as part of a single unified program, irrespective of the division that initially receives the proposal. For additional information about the Robotics program and guidance on determining the appropriate robotics-related funding opportunities at NSF, please see the Robotics@NSF landing page: <https://www.nsf.gov/robotics>.

The Robotics program will accept CAREER proposals, subject to the [CAREER Solicitation](#) deadlines and other requirements ([www.nsf.gov/career](http://www.nsf.gov/career)), starting in July 2020. [CISE Research Initiation Initiative \(CRII\)](#) proposals related to CISE topics in robotics should be submitted to the CRII program in the appropriate CISE division.

Starting August 1, 2020 the Robotics program will accept unsolicited proposals at any time.. Prospective investigators are encouraged to discuss topic suitability and project scope with one of the Program Officers prior to proposal preparation. The list of Program Officers can be found on the program page.

This Robotics program will not affect deadlines, review or funding of 2020 submissions to the [National Robotics Initiative 2.0 \(NRI-2.0\)](#) program ([NSF 20-522](#)).

Full program details are available at: [https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=505784](https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=505784)

Dawn M. Tilbury  
Assistant Director  
Directorate for Engineering

Margaret Martonosi  
Assistant Director  
Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering