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NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
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ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

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## Dear Colleague Letter: Guidance for Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE) Proposers to the Faculty Early-Career Development (CAREER) and CISE Research Initiation Initiative (CRII) Programs

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June 05, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

With this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL), the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE) seeks to provide members of the CISE research community with clarifying guidance about the directorate's implementation of the NSF Faculty Early-Career Development (CAREER) and CISE Research Initiation Initiative (CRII) programs. The intended audiences include both prospective early-career principal investigators (PIs) and relevant academic leadership.

### SUBMITTING PROPOSALS TO THE NSF CAREER PROGRAM

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**Prospective CAREER awardees should submit proposals to the program early in their faculty careers; CISE encourages candidates to submit their first CAREER proposals within two years of starting their tenure-track appointments.** This guidance is consistent with the foundational principle of the CAREER program, which is to enable, rather than simply recognize, outstanding research and educational scholarship by early-career faculty.

### CAREER VS. CRII EXPLAINED

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**The CRII and CAREER programs have different goals and purposes.** The CRII program is intended to provide start-up support for early-career faculty without access to the necessary resources, defined in this case to be two years of support for two graduate students per year or the equivalent thereof, to initiate their independent research careers. **Faculty already having this level of support, either in the form of start-up packages from their universities or from other sources (e.g., institutional / federal / industry / non-profit), are not eligible for CRII awards and should not submit proposals for them.**

The CAREER program, on the other hand, is intended to provide early-career faculty with stable support over a sustained period (of about five years) to develop their careers as outstanding researchers and educators. **CRII awards are not intended to be, and should not be viewed as, prerequisites for CAREER awards.**

Please see the [CAREER](#) and [CRII](#) program webpages for complete information about the goals and eligibility criteria for these respective programs. In case of inconsistencies between the guidance in this DCL and the respective solicitations for these programs, the solicitation guidance will take precedence.

## BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

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CISE is fully committed to the success of early-career faculty. For the past several years, the CAREER and CRII programs have been the primary vehicles used by CISE to nurture the research and education efforts of early-career faculty. This is the reason that each program limits who may submit proposals based on the prospective PI's career stage. The CRII program also has the additional goal of providing resources for starting faculty who do not have access to adequate levels of resources to initiate a research career. The CAREER program, on the other hand, is intended to provide tenure-track but as yet untenured assistant professors (or equivalent) with stable funding over a sustained duration to develop their careers as proven, independent scholars.

While distinct programs, CRII and CAREER are both intended to encourage eligible faculty to submit proposals early in their careers to NSF. Writing cogent and successful proposals is a necessary skill for faculty engaged in research, and both of these programs provide early-career faculty, who otherwise satisfy the other eligibility criteria for the respective programs, with opportunities to gain experience with proposal writing and also obtain feedback from NSF reviewers in the process. Ultimately, the above guidance, including the encouragement for earlier CAREER proposals, is intended to help PIs succeed in their careers, and to strongly position themselves for future opportunities and recognitions, such as the Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE).

The above clarifications are also consistent with the findings of a recent community report encouraging the emphases of these perspectives within the two programs.

Early-career faculty interested in submitting to CAREER and CRII are also encouraged to consult with the recent [CISE CAREER Grant-Writing Workshop](#) and [CRII webinar](#).

For additional information, please contact the members of the CISE CAREER and CRII Working Group (below), or your cognizant NSF program director.

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Sincerely,

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